

# **Building a Culture of Evidence for Community College Student Success**

## **Early Progress in the Achieving the Dream Initiative**

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**May 2007**

Funding for this report was provided by Lumina Foundation for Education.

Dissemination of MDRC publications is supported by the following funders that help finance MDRC's public policy outreach and expanding efforts to communicate the results and implications of our work to policymakers, practitioners, and others: Alcoa Foundation, The Ambrose Monell Foundation, Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation, and The Starr Foundation. In addition, earnings from the MDRC Endowment help sustain our dissemination efforts. Contributors to the MDRC Endowment include Alcoa Foundation, The Ambrose Monell Foundation, Anheuser-Busch Foundation, Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Ford Foundation, The George Gund Foundation, The Grable Foundation, The Lizabeth and Frank Newman Charitable Foundation, The New York Times Company Foundation, Jan Nicholson, Paul H. O'Neill Charitable Foundation, John S. Reed, The Sandler Family Supporting Foundation, and The Stupski Family Fund, as well as other individual contributors.

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## Overview

In 2003, Lumina Foundation for Education launched a bold, multiyear, national initiative called *Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count*, to help students stay in school and succeed. The initiative is focused particularly on students who have faced the most barriers to success, including low-income students and students of color. Initially, 27 community colleges in five states joined the initiative; there are now 82 institutions in 15 states.

Participating colleges commit to collecting and analyzing data to improve student outcomes — a process known as “building a culture of evidence.” Specifically, colleges mine transcripts and gather other information to understand how students are faring over time and which groups need the most assistance. From this work, colleges implement strategies to improve academic outcomes. Colleges evaluate their strategies, expand effective ones, and use data to guide budgeting and other institutional decisions. Participating colleges receive a \$50,000 planning grant followed by a four-year, \$400,000 implementation grant, along with assistance from expert advisers hired by the initiative. This report describes the progress that the first 27 colleges have made after planning and one year of implementation. The key findings are:

- **As expected, institutional measures reveal low rates of success at baseline.** Before the initiative was launched, colleges reported that, on average, only about 30 percent of students who were referred to introductory college English completed the course within three years. For introductory math, the rate was about 20 percent.
- **The colleges embraced the goal of building a culture of evidence.** The presidents at the colleges generally showed strong leadership, and every college created at least a small team to plan and implement Achieving the Dream.
- **About half the colleges used data analysis to identify problems to address on their campuses.** Colleges were not always sure about how to respond to what they had learned from the data, however. Some colleges struggled because their research offices were understaffed or their computer systems were weak.
- **Colleges implemented a wide array of strategies to improve student success,** including strengthening academic advising and orientation programs, revamping developmental education, and offering professional development for faculty and staff.
- **Six colleges showed signs of institutionalizing a culture of evidence after only one year.** Most other colleges showed signs of progress.

The evaluation team will return to the colleges over the next few years to determine what further progress they — and their students — have made. A final report is planned for 2010.



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## Preface

With their open admissions policies, convenient locations, and low tuition, community colleges are a critical resource for millions of adults who might otherwise be unable to go to college. For low-income people, in particular, these colleges offer a pathway out of poverty and into better jobs. Yet nearly half of students who begin at community colleges do not transfer to a four-year college or complete a certificate or degree program within eight years of initial enrollment.

Can community colleges make better use of data to improve student outcomes? That's the fundamental idea behind *Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count*, a bold initiative launched in 2003 by Lumina Foundation for Education to help community college students succeed — particularly, low-income students and students of color, who have traditionally faced the most barriers to success. Today, Achieving the Dream includes 82 colleges in 15 states, supported by 15 partner organizations. The initiative's central focus is to help community colleges use what they learn from data on student outcomes to develop new programs and policies — and to generate long-term institutional change. Achieving the Dream provides a way for colleges to engage in thoughtful self-assessment and reflection on how they can serve students better.

This report, a coproduction of MDRC and the Community College Research Center (CCRC) at Columbia University's Teachers College, describes Achieving the Dream's attempt to build this "culture of evidence" at the first 27 community colleges that joined the initiative. After little more than a year, every college has made some progress toward that goal; many have developed new programs for struggling students; and six colleges already show signs of institutionalizing evidence-based decision-making and planning.

This report reflects only the first year of implementation of a four-year initiative, and our study will continue to investigate whether and how colleges make changes in their organizational culture and practices to serve students better. We will also examine whether outcomes improve on such critical measures as the rates of students who complete developmental education courses and who persist from semester to semester.

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## Acknowledgments

The Achieving the Dream evaluation is made possible by the support of Lumina Foundation for Education. We are grateful for Lumina's generous and steadfast support for this evaluation, as one component of the Achieving the Dream initiative effort to improve outcomes for community college students.

MDRC and the Community College Research Center (CCRC) appreciate the cooperation of the colleges represented in this report: Alamo Community College District, Brookhaven College, Broward Community College, Central New Mexico Community College, Coastal Bend College, Danville Community College, Durham Technical Community College, El Paso Community College, Galveston College, Guilford Technical Community College, Hillsborough Community College, Houston Community College System, Martin Community College, Mountain Empire Community College, New Mexico State University-Doña Ana, Patrick Henry Community College, Paul D. Camp Community College, San Juan College, Santa Fe Community College, South Texas College, Southwest Texas Junior College, Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute, Tallahassee Community College, Tidewater Community College, University of New Mexico-Gallup, Valencia Community College, and Wayne Community College. We are especially grateful for the openness of the college administrators, faculty, and staff, who generously gave their time to be interviewed for this report.

We also thank the larger Achieving the Dream family. Our national partners were kind enough to read and critique the report with care. We are particularly grateful for written comments received from Susan Conner of Lumina Foundation for Education; Carol Lincoln and Kate Doom of MDC, Inc.; John Lee of JBL Associates; Sylvia Soholt and Andrea Sussman of KSA-Plus Communications; and Lana Muraskin, a data facilitator. In addition, the coaches and data facilitators working on Achieving the Dream offered invaluable support in arranging and facilitating our field visits to the college campuses.

The ambitious work of the Achieving the Dream evaluation represents a collaborative effort between CCRC and MDRC. The research team that conducted interviews at the 27 sites included the authors and Lande Ajose, Thomas Bailey, Katherine Boswell, Analia Ivanier, Vanessa Smith Morest, Michelle Van Noy, and Leo Yan. Early report drafts benefited from careful review by Margaret Bald, John Hutchins, Robert Ivry, Lashawn Richburg-Hayes, Doug Slater, and Mary Visher. John Hutchins and Robert Weber edited the report, and Stephanie Cowell prepared the report for publication.

The Authors



## Executive Summary

Community colleges play a vital role in American society, helping millions of adults to achieve their academic and personal goals and preparing workers for the modern economy. Because of their low cost and accessibility, community colleges are especially important institutions for low-income students, students of color, and first-generation college students. Unfortunately, far too many students end up dropping out of community college without earning a certificate or degree or transferring to another college or university. While poor academic preparation and other challenges faced by students, such as having to work full time or being a single parent, are part of the explanation, policymakers are increasingly holding community colleges accountable for student performance and are looking for ways to help them increase student success.

*Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count* is a bold, multiyear, national initiative designed to help more community college students succeed, either by earning a certificate or degree or by transferring to another institution. The initiative is particularly concerned about helping students who have traditionally faced the most barriers to success, including low-income students and students of color. Launched by Lumina Foundation for Education in 2003, the initiative grew to involve 58 institutions in nine states by 2006 (see Figure ES.1). (Twenty-four colleges were added in April 2007, bringing the total to 82 institutions in 15 states.) The initiative also involves many national organizations or foundations that play key supportive roles. Together, these organizations are working to change the culture and practices *inside* community colleges, as well as *external* factors that shape institutional behavior, such as public policy, research, and public engagement.

MDRC and the Community College Research Center (CCRC) are evaluating the work that is taking place inside community colleges — specifically, inside the first 27 colleges to join the initiative from Florida, New Mexico, North Carolina, Texas, and Virginia (called “Round 1 colleges”). The initiative is attempting to focus community colleges on *understanding and making better use of data to improve student outcomes* — a process that is referred to as “building a culture of evidence.” Participating colleges collect and analyze longitudinal data on student achievement along with other information that will help them identify factors that facilitate or hinder students’ academic progress. From these efforts, colleges are expected to assess what is happening on their campuses in an open, straightforward, and rigorous way and to make lasting changes in their operations and culture.

This report captures the progress the Round 1 colleges have made after one year of planning and one year of implementation of Achieving the Dream. (Altogether, the initiative will extend at least five years at the colleges.) The report also presents data on average institutional performance on selected student outcomes prior to the start of the initiative. Later on in the evaluation,

## Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count

**Figure ES.1**

### Locations of Colleges in the Achieving the Dream Initiative, 2003-2006



- ▲ Round 1 Achieving the Dream colleges covered in this report
- Other Achieving the Dream colleges

NOTE: In April 2007, 24 colleges were added to the Achieving the Dream initiative, bringing the total to 82 institutions in 15 states.

these data will be used as a baseline against which changes in student achievement will be measured. The initiative's design and this report's principal findings are summarized below.

## **The Initiative's Design**

Most community colleges across the country gather large amounts of data on students through enrollment forms, placement tests, and academic transcripts. However, because community college funding is largely based on enrollments, there is little incentive for colleges to examine whether the same students return each semester or are accomplishing their academic goals in a timely fashion. Colleges that participate in Achieving the Dream agree to look at their data more closely in order to learn whether their students are staying in school and meeting other critical benchmarks, such as completing developmental courses and advancing to college-level courses. They also agree to break down their data to determine whether all students are making progress at the same rate or whether there are "achievement gaps" among some segments of the population, such as students of color or low-income students. Figure ES.2 depicts the theory underlying this work and how it is expected to lead to better student outcomes. The process unfolds in three stages:

1. *Diagnosis and planning.* Colleges collect and analyze data to understand how students are faring over time and to identify any gaps in achievement among particular subgroups. If the analysis reveals that some students are not making adequate progress, colleges will be motivated to rethink existing practices.
2. *Implementation and evaluation.* Colleges implement strategies to improve student performance, such as adopting new developmental education curricula or strengthening academic advising. They also conduct rigorous assessments to determine whether these strategies improve student outcomes.
3. *Institutionalization.* Colleges adopt and expand effective strategies. Program review, planning, and budgeting are driven by evidence of what works best for students.

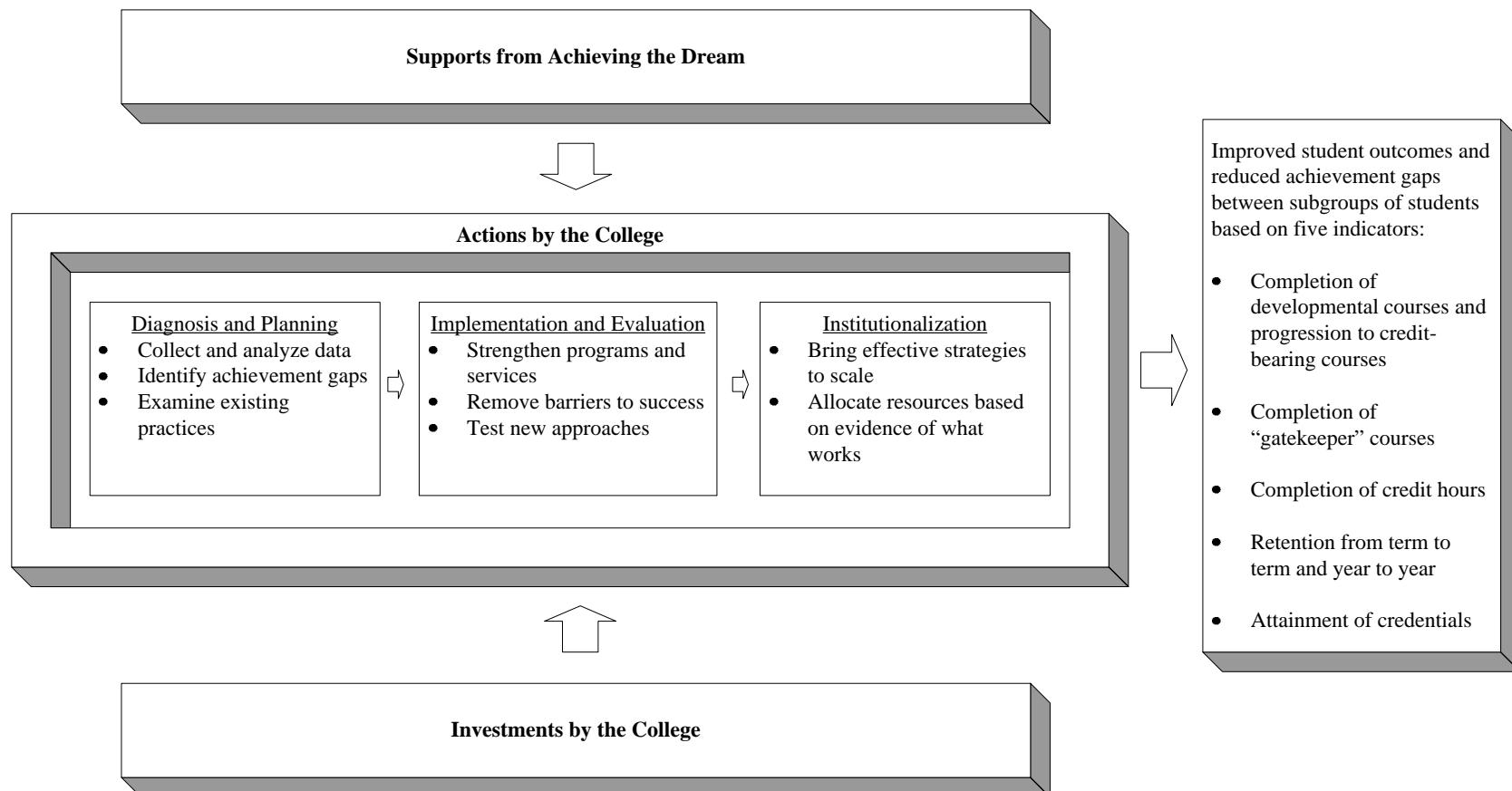
Achieving the Dream provides both financial and technical support to help colleges undertake this process. The financial support includes planning grants of \$50,000 and implementation grants of \$400,000 over four years that colleges can use to support data collection and analysis as well as implementation of program strategies. The technical support includes two outside consultants — a coach (usually a former community college president) and a data facilitator — who advise the college on how to perform the data analysis, interpret and communicate

## Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count

Figure ES.2

### Theory of Action for the Achieving the Dream Initiative

ES-4



the findings to faculty and staff, and use the information to make improvements in college programs and services. The coach and data facilitator each spend 12 days working with the colleges during the planning phase and the first year of implementation, and they gradually reduce their time in subsequent years. Finally, all the colleges attend annual meetings where initiative goals are reinforced, promising program strategies are shared, and team-building is fostered.

Each college participating in Achieving the Dream is expected to commit its own resources as well. The president is indispensable in articulating a vision for student success and equity for all students. Teams of administrators, faculty, and staff are expected to take responsibility for the data collection and analysis as well as program planning, implementation, and evaluation. Ultimately, all college personnel have a role to play in ensuring student success. If the theory underlying the initiative is correct, over time more students are expected to complete developmental and “gatekeeper” courses (for example, English or Math 101), earn credits for the courses they attempt, persist in school longer, and earn more certificates and degrees. Gaps in achievement levels among various racial, ethnic, or income groups are expected to narrow or be eliminated.

## **Findings on Institutional Performance at Baseline**

All the colleges participating in Achieving the Dream submit student records to a centralized database that was created for the initiative. Colleges were asked to analyze student records going back to 2002, three years before they received their implementation grants. Going forward, these data will be used as a baseline to determine whether colleges succeed in improving student outcomes.

Findings on institutional performance indicators at baseline are summarized in Figure ES.3. The statistics show what happened over a three-year period to first-time certificate or degree-seeking students who enrolled in one of the Achieving the Dream colleges in fall 2002. In this analysis, the average performance of every college — from the very biggest to the smallest — is weighted equally.

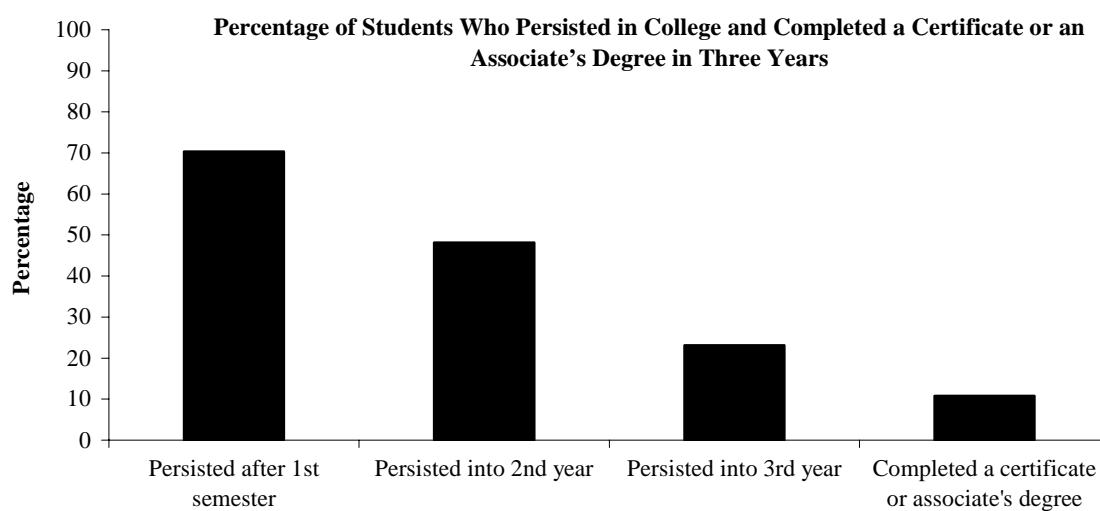
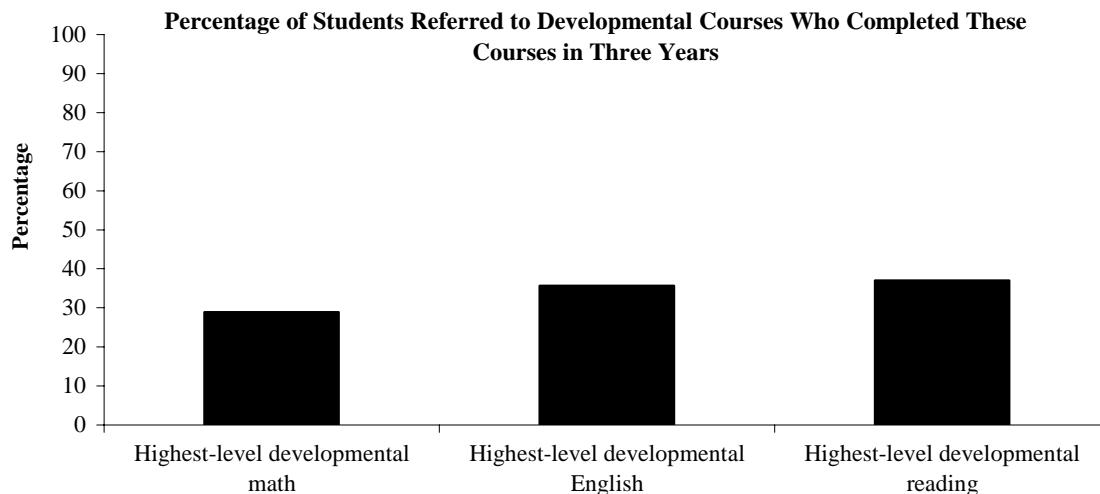
- **The institutional measures show that, on average, students at the Achieving the Dream colleges are struggling academically.**

Only a fraction of students at the Achieving the Dream colleges are reaching critical academic benchmarks. For example, between 29 and 37 percent of students who attempted the highest level of developmental math, English, or reading actually completed that course within a three-year period. About one out of five students referred to a gatekeeper math course are successful within a three-year period; for gatekeeper English, about three out of ten students are successful. Seventy percent of students who enrolled in fall 2002 stayed on for a second semester, but, by the third year, the enrollment rate for this group fell to 23 percent. On average, only

### Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count

**Figure ES.3**

#### **Levels of Student Persistence and Achievement: Institutional Averages Across the Achieving the Dream Round 1 Colleges at Baseline**



SOURCE: MDRC calculations using the Achieving the Dream database.

about 11 percent of students who started in 2002 earned a credential or diploma within three years. Because these figures represent averages across Achieving the Dream colleges, success rates for students at individual colleges may be higher or lower. (The statistics for many other community colleges across the nation are similar.)

- **There are gaps in achievement by racial and ethnic subgroups, but not on all measures. Sometimes the gaps run contrary to what was expected.**

Across the Achieving the Dream colleges, the rates of persistence among African-American and non-Hispanic white students are roughly the same, while Hispanic students show significantly *higher* persistence rates on some measures. Unfortunately, persistence does not always translate to degree completion: The average rate of completing an associate's degree was significantly *lower* for African-American, Hispanic, and Native American students than for non-Hispanic white students. Again, these findings are based on averages across all institutions; at individual colleges, achievement rates of various racial and ethnic subgroups may differ.

- **Students who received Pell Grants (a proxy for low-income status) generally had better outcomes than students who did not receive Pell Grants.**

The federal Pell Grant program provides financial aid to low-income college students. On average, the rates of successful completion of developmental and gatekeeper courses at the Achieving the Dream colleges were significantly higher for students who received Pell Grants than for nonrecipients. The average rates for earning credentials or being enrolled in college in the third year were also significantly higher among Pell Grant recipients than nonrecipients.

## **Findings on Implementation of Achieving the Dream**

The evaluation team visited the first 27 colleges to join the Achieving the Dream initiative in spring 2006. At each college, administrators, faculty, staff, and others working on Achieving the Dream were interviewed, along with a few faculty members who were not directly involved in the initiative. The interviews focused mainly on the colleges' efforts at problem diagnosis, planning, and early implementation of strategies for increasing student success.

### **Building a Culture of Evidence**

- **The “culture of evidence” concept resonated strongly with the colleges.**

Nearly everyone interviewed at the 27 colleges supported the basic tenet of Achieving the Dream: to use data to diagnose barriers to student achievement and guide institutional decision-making on how best to serve students. Some interviewees spoke of a change in attitudes such that people were asking, “What does the evidence show?” as opposed to relying on personal beliefs or

anecdotes. When confronted with data on poor student performance, interviewees at many of the colleges indicated that faculty and staff felt motivated to address those problems.

- **Most of the colleges attempted to follow the general outlines of the data analysis process advocated by Achieving the Dream. Faculty and staff involvement was usually limited to a few individuals, however.**

Achieving the Dream colleges were asked to create “data teams” to orchestrate the collection and analysis of student records and other information, such as student surveys. Most of the colleges did so, and the teams were usually headed up by each college’s director of institutional research. Some colleges also involved a few faculty and staff on the data teams. There were relatively few examples where the majority of faculty within academic departments (such as English and math) had begun looking at data.

- **About half the colleges used data to identify priority problems to address during the initiative.**

Many colleges reported using longitudinal data on student outcomes as well as focus groups and student surveys to identify priority problems that they wanted to tackle. There was disagreement among interviewees about the usefulness of the data that colleges were required to share with the initiative, which some individuals said was burdensome or duplicative of what their school was already doing. However, even these critics agreed that longitudinal tracking of students was a powerful method for identifying gaps in student achievement.

- **Fewer colleges used their data analysis to select strategies for the implementation phase.**

Achieving the Dream colleges are expected to choose programmatic strategies based on their analysis of data on students. Of the 27 Round 1 colleges, 10 were able to make links between the analysis they performed and the strategies that they chose to improve student performance. The remainder tended to base their selection of strategies on literature reviews, suggestions they heard at Achieving the Dream conferences, or ideas they had before becoming involved in the initiative.

- **One out of four colleges had plans for evaluating the effectiveness of the strategies that they had chosen to improve student performance.**

A fundamental premise in building a “culture of evidence” is that colleges should assess their programs and services to learn which strategies are working. Effective strategies should be preserved and expanded; ineffective strategies should be discarded. Most colleges had not yet thought about how to evaluate their program strategies. Among the colleges that did have

evaluation plans, some suffered from weak designs, usually because they had not identified a valid comparison group.

- **Two common obstacles to building a culture of evidence were difficulty retrieving and analyzing data from information technology systems and limited institutional research capacity. In addition, administration, faculty, and staff at most colleges were unfamiliar with how to use data to improve student outcomes.**

Some of the colleges had computerized student record systems that were poorly designed or were undergoing conversions, which made it hard for them to perform the data analysis required by the initiative in a timely way. Over one-third of the colleges reported having insufficient institutional research capacity to support broad-based use of data for decision-making. Moreover, few administrators, faculty, and staff at the colleges were accustomed to using data in ways that Achieving the Dream advocates. On most campuses, the lack of familiarity with using data to drive decision-making extends to the most basic level, such as what questions to ask.

- **Some faculty and staff were concerned that data would be used against them or were skeptical that increased use of data and research will lead to improved student outcomes.**

At many colleges, at least a few faculty and staff felt that they were being blamed (or could be blamed) for poor student performance or that the outcomes being analyzed were not appropriate for assessing things that really mattered, such as whether students were learning the course material. Administrators at most of the colleges have tried to assure faculty and staff that the data are being collected to better understand student performance and make improvements and not to be punitive.

### **Leadership and Engagement**

- **College presidents expressed strong support for Achieving the Dream.**

Presidents cited several reasons for wanting their college to participate in Achieving the Dream, including wanting to help students succeed, promote data-driven decision-making, and bolster reaccreditation processes. Several presidents reported that involvement in such a high-profile, national initiative added crucial external support and credibility to their desire to build a culture of evidence. Some presidents led or sat on Achieving the Dream committees, and many spoke about the initiative at college convocations and meetings with their governing boards.

- **Management of the initiative was usually delegated to senior college administrators below the level of president.**

Almost all the college presidents delegated responsibility for managing the initiative to other personnel, often to a vice president or a dean, although there were a few instances when the role was handed off to someone without sufficient stature. In the few places where this occurred, the initiative suffered as a result.

- **One-third of the Achieving the Dream colleges recently experienced or were in the midst of a change in leadership.**

Given the president's key role in articulating a vision and building commitment for Achieving the Dream, a change at the top could slow down the progress of the initiative. A few colleges appeared to have this problem. In at least one case, however, a newly installed president was credited with bringing ideas and enthusiasm that the former president lacked.

- **Most colleges had a core team of administrators, faculty, and staff who collaborated on the initiative and were enthusiastic supporters. Beyond this core team, faculty and staff involvement was generally limited.**

Achieving the Dream expected colleges to create a core team of individuals to guide and manage the initiative. Most of the colleges did so, and the commitment of these individuals was high. At some schools, Achieving the Dream was credited with increasing communication among divisions of the college that formerly had minimal dialogue about student outcomes, such as student services and academic departments. Beyond the members of the core teams, however, the evaluators found that relatively few faculty and staff on most campuses were knowledgeable about Achieving the Dream activities at their colleges, though some had at least a general notion that there was a push to improve institutional performance or student outcomes.

- **Some faculty and staff held beliefs or attitudes that ran counter to Achieving the Dream principles.**

In addition to being a “data-driven” initiative, Achieving the Dream is founded on the idea that all students can succeed. At many campuses, at least a few faculty and staff expressed the view that students themselves should be held accountable for their outcomes — and not the institutions. Others blamed colleagues for poor performance or worried that efforts to increase graduation rates would mean lowering academic standards. Some administrators and faculty seemed troubled by the initiative’s particular emphasis on improving the success of students of color and of low-income students, believing that this amounted to favoritism or unequal treatment. Achieving the Dream has tried to promote the view that equity in outcomes does not imply treating all students the same; some students may need more support than others in order to succeed.

- **Some of the colleges worked to incorporate student and community perspectives into their Achieving the Dream activities.**

At almost half the colleges, student views — obtained through focus groups or surveys — were an important consideration in identifying key problem areas during the planning year. Incorporating student views into the decision-making process was a new development for some of these schools. In general, however, the colleges did not involve students in the process of designing initiative strategies. Similarly, at least 11 colleges were working with other educational or civic organizations in planning and implementing Achieving the Dream strategies, but other colleges had not developed partnerships beyond their campus boundaries.

### **Strategies for Enhancing Student Success**

- **The colleges implemented a wide variety of strategies to improve student outcomes.**

Across the 27 colleges, five prominent strategies selected to increase student success were (1) strengthening academic advising services; (2) creating or revamping orientation and “college success” programs or courses for incoming students; (3) supplemental instruction and tutoring; (4) learning communities, in which small groups of students take two or more linked courses together; and (5) professional development, including training in cultural competence and racial dynamics for faculty and staff.

- **By spring 2006, just one year into the Achieving the Dream initiative, the majority of colleges had begun piloting or implementing at least one of their strategies.**

Most colleges tried to work on several fronts to improve student success — for example, strengthening advising services *and* developing learning communities. They often focused on one or two strategies initially and planned to try additional approaches in the coming academic year.

- **Many of the colleges’ strategies had only been partially implemented and affected relatively few students.**

Where the evaluation team was able to assess how many students were affected by the colleges’ strategies, the numbers generally were small. Only a minority of strategies targeted all students. Some colleges were sufficiently advanced in their efforts to be characterized as having reached full implementation, though in most cases these strategies were built on programs that pre-dated Achieving the Dream or were one-time events, like diversity training for faculty and staff.

### **Early Progress Toward Institutionalizing the Principles and Practices of Achieving the Dream**

Given that the 27 colleges were just nearing the end of their first year of implementation grants when field visits were conducted — and had three more years to go — the evaluation

team did not expect to find that most colleges had fully institutionalized Achieving the Dream principles and practices. Nonetheless, the team looked for early signs and grouped the colleges according to their progress.

- **Six colleges already showed clear signs of institutionalizing a culture of evidence. Five more had taken important preliminary steps in this direction.**

Achieving the Dream differs from most grant-funded initiatives in its focus on institutional change. Although it is too soon to make definitive conclusions, six colleges showed strong indications of broadly engaging administrators, faculty, and staff in using data for program review, strategic planning, and budgeting. Another five colleges had adopted, or were in the process of adopting, evidence-based strategic planning procedures. It is important to note that nearly all these institutions reported that they were moving in this direction before they became involved with Achieving the Dream, although they also indicated that the initiative energized and helped focus their efforts.

- **Ten colleges had in place some of the building blocks of a culture of evidence. Six colleges were struggling.**

Ten of the remaining 16 colleges had gathered and analyzed data to identify gaps in student achievement, though the connection between their analysis and the strategies being implemented was not always clear. Some of them were hampered by difficulties retrieving and analyzing data — usually because of weak or cumbersome information technology systems or overburdened information technology or institutional research departments — or by turnover of key leadership. Six colleges had limited data collection and analysis capabilities and had not figured out how to begin using data on student outcomes to evaluate and improve programs and services.

- **Accreditation processes and state policy initiatives helped to reinforce the goals of Achieving the Dream at a majority of the colleges.**

Interviewees at 23 of the colleges mentioned the connection between Achieving the Dream and the increased emphasis by accreditation agencies on using data about student outcomes to guide decision-making. In Texas, interviewees at two colleges mentioned the synergy between the goals of Achieving the Dream and those of the state's "Closing the Gaps" initiative, which seeks to address growing inequities in college access and attainment among the state's growing Latino population. Virginia's community college system developed a strategic plan that explicitly referenced Achieving the Dream and the use of data to revise policies.

## Conclusion

Achieving the Dream is attempting to change the practices and cultures of community colleges by focusing them on using data to diagnose problems and make lasting improvements in institutional practices and cultures. This report finds substantial evidence that most of the first 27 colleges to join the initiative have fully embraced the goals of the initiative. A subset of six colleges already appears to have begun to institutionalize the principles and practices of Achieving the Dream, in that they have involved a broad segment of the campus community in analyzing data on student outcomes and were using data for strategic planning, budgeting, and review. Another five colleges were taking preliminary steps in this direction. The other 16 colleges — while making some progress — often had difficulty meeting the initiative's research demands. Many of them faced problems retrieving data from student information systems or had limited institutional research capacity. Most lacked experience or know-how in using data to inform improvements in programs and services. Most had yet to involve faculty and staff outside the core team. A few colleges lacked strong attention from their leadership or experienced turnover in key administrative positions.

Nearly all the colleges had begun to implement program strategies to improve student success. In 10 colleges, the strategies were clearly linked to the data analysis that they had performed; in the remainder, program strategies were selected based on a review of the literature, presentations at Achieving the Dream conferences, or ideas that college personnel had been contemplating before becoming involved with the initiative. As would be expected at this early stage of the initiative, most of the program strategies were just getting off the ground and affected relatively small numbers of students. A majority of colleges had not yet developed plans to evaluate the effectiveness of their chosen program strategies.

MDRC and CCRC will return to the colleges in 2009 to conduct a second round of interviews with college personnel and will administer two rounds of surveys to college administrators and faculty in 2007 and 2009. The purposes of the interviews and surveys will be to determine how the initiative has evolved and to capture changes in institutional practices and attitudes. At a subset of colleges, MDRC will also assist in conducting a rigorous assessment of programs or strategies that have been implemented to improve student outcomes. At other selected institutions, there will be an in-depth study on the cost of Achieving the Dream and an ethnographic study of students. A final report is planned for 2010.



## Chapter 1

# Introduction

Community colleges play an essential role in American higher education. Located in urban, suburban, and rural communities in all 50 states, they are among the most affordable institutions of higher learning, enrolling more than 10 million students annually — close to half of all students who attend college or university. They serve large proportions of students of color, low-income students, and first-generation college students. They prepare students for transfer to four-year colleges and universities, while also providing direct entrée to careers in business, information technology, health care, public safety, early childhood education, and numerous other fields. In this regard, community colleges benefit not only the students they enroll but also society at large, providing an educated workforce prepared to meet the demands of the modern economy.

Nevertheless, many students who enter community colleges do not succeed in accomplishing their academic goals. A national longitudinal study indicates that only 31 percent of all students who enter community college with the intention of earning a degree accomplish this goal at *any* college or university within a six-year period.<sup>1</sup> In part, this is because many students who enter community college are not academically prepared to do college-level work. Research shows that approximately 60 percent of freshmen beginning at community college are in need of at least one remedial or developmental course.<sup>2</sup> Research also shows that community college students are likely to have one or more “risk factors” associated with poor persistence in higher education. These include delaying college until at least a year after high school, not having a regular high school diploma, being financially independent from their parents, having children, being single parents, or working full time.<sup>3</sup>

Because a college education is so important to the well-being of individuals and society, policymakers and educators are questioning what government, the private sector, and postsecondary institutions can do to increase access and achievement. The Commission on Higher Education, appointed by Education Secretary Margaret Spellings in 2005, recently issued a set of recommendations relevant to community colleges and four-year colleges and universities alike. Among them were the need to create a “robust culture of accountability and transparency” that is founded on better measures of student learning and progress and a “culture of continuous

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<sup>1</sup>U.S. Department of Education (2002).

<sup>2</sup>Adelman (2004).

<sup>3</sup>U.S. Department of Education (2002).

innovation and quality improvement” that leads to new pedagogies, curricula, and technologies to improve learning.<sup>4</sup>

*Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count* — a bold, multiyear, national initiative launched by Lumina Foundation for Education — confronts these issues directly. Its primary goal is to help more community college students succeed, either by earning a certificate or degree or by transferring to another institution. The initiative is particularly concerned about helping students who have traditionally faced the most barriers to success, including low-income students and students of color. Achieving the Dream focuses community colleges on *understanding and making better use of data to improve student outcomes*. Specifically, participating colleges collect and analyze information that will help them identify factors that facilitate or hinder student progress. From these efforts, colleges will assess what is happening on their campuses in an open, straightforward, and rigorous way and will make lasting changes in their practices and cultures.<sup>5</sup>

This report examines the early implementation of Achieving the Dream at the 27 community colleges in five states that were the first to join the initiative — called “Round 1 colleges.” Since then, more colleges and states have been added, for a total of 82 institutions in 15 states (see Figure 1.1). The remainder of this chapter describes the history and design of the initiative, its “theory of action,” the participating Round 1 colleges, and the evaluation methodology.

## History and Design of the Initiative

Lumina Foundation for Education was founded in 2000 by proceeds garnered from the sale of the USA Group, a financial services corporation that supports education. Following an internal planning process in 2002-2003, Lumina identified community colleges as a “high-need area” that was ripe for systemic reform and direct assistance<sup>6</sup> and convened a meeting with community college experts and stakeholders from throughout the country to vet ideas and solicit feedback on a grant-making strategy. The meeting led to the formation of a partnership between Lumina and a group of eight other national organizations that worked together to create Achieving the Dream (see Table 1.1). Since then, the partnership has added many new funders and organizations (see Table 1.2). MDC, Inc., a nonprofit corporation dedicated to helping organizations and communities close the gaps that separate people from opportunity, is managing the initiative.

From the earliest conversations, it was clear that the partners had big ambitions for Achieving the Dream. They spoke about fostering fundamental changes in the culture and operations

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<sup>4</sup>U.S. Department of Education (2006).

<sup>5</sup>Achieving the Dream (2006).

<sup>6</sup>Lumina Foundation for Education (2002).

## Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count

**Figure 1.1**

### Locations of Colleges in the Achieving the Dream Initiative, 2003-2006



- ▲ Round 1 colleges joined in 2004.
- Round 2 colleges joined in 2005.
- ◆ Round 3 colleges joined in 2006.

NOTES: States with Round 1 colleges (the subject of this report) are gray. In April 2007, 24 colleges were added to the Achieving the Dream initiative, bringing the total to 82 institutions in 15 states. The names and locations of these Round 4 colleges were not completely determined when this report was published.

## Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count

**Table 1.1**

### Original National Partners of the Achieving the Dream Initiative

National Partner	Primary Responsibilities
American Association of Community Colleges <a href="http://www.aacc.nche.edu">www.aacc.nche.edu</a>	Helped recruit and select colleges, hosts the Achieving the Dream Web site that serves as repository of data collected from the colleges, and coordinates annual Strategy Institutes
Community College Leadership Program, University of Texas <a href="http://www.utexas.edu/academic/cclp">www.utexas.edu/academic/cclp</a>	Hires coaches and manages the coaching activities and assists with planning and execution of kickoff meetings for new colleges joining the initiative
Community College Research Center, Columbia University <a href="http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu">ccrc.tc.columbia.edu</a>	Oversees student records database for the colleges with JBL Associates, <sup>a</sup> leads knowledge development activities for the initiative, and partners with MDRC on the evaluation
Jobs for the Future <a href="http://www.jff.org">www.jff.org</a>	Coordinates the state policy work and develops strategies to align state laws and administrative procedures to Achieving the Dream goals
Lumina Foundation for Education <a href="http://www.luminafoundation.org">www.luminafoundation.org</a>	Launched the initiative and funded the first 27 colleges and original 9 partners
MDC <a href="http://www.mdcinc.org">www.mdcinc.org</a>	Manages and coordinates the overall initiative, hires and manages data facilitators, and oversees communications <sup>b</sup>
MDRC <a href="http://www.mdrc.org">www.mdrc.org</a>	Conducts the evaluation of the initiative
Public Agenda <a href="http://www.publicagenda.org">www.publicagenda.org</a>	Works with selected colleges to increase public awareness of campus issues and conducts focus groups to capture opinions of faculty, students, and community residents

NOTES: <sup>a</sup>JBL Associates, a higher education consulting firm, maintains and compiles the Achieving the Dream database under contract with the Community College Research Center.

<sup>b</sup>KSA-Plus Communications supports the communications function under contract with MDC, Inc.

of community colleges — changes that would lead to measurable and lasting improvements in student outcomes. They also spoke of changing the context in which community colleges operate — everything from the rules governing their accreditation and funding to public awareness and support for community colleges. With leadership from MDC, Inc., the partners developed an Integrated Action Plan that called for coordinated and mutually reinforcing work on five fronts:<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>MDC, Inc. (2006b). The language in the *Integrated Action Plan* refers to five strands designed to reach the initiative's intended outcomes: (1) promote and sustain institutional change, (2) develop policy, (3) build knowledge, (4) engage the public, and (5) enhance partners' capacity.

## Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count

**Table 1.2**

### New Funders and Organizations of the Achieving the Dream Initiative

Funder/Organization	Primary Responsibilities
The Boston Foundation <a href="http://www.tbf.org">www.tbf.org</a>	Funds colleges in Massachusetts (Round 4)
College Spark <a href="http://www.collegespark.org">www.collegespark.org</a>	Funds colleges in Washington State (Round 3)
The Heinz Endowments <a href="http://www.heinz.org">www.heinz.org</a>	Funds colleges in Pennsylvania (Round 3)
Houston Endowment Inc. <a href="http://www.houstonendowment.org">www.houstonendowment.org</a>	Funds 10 colleges in Houston, Texas (Round 3), and 1 additional Houston-area institution (Round 4)
Institute for Higher Education, University of Florida <a href="http://www.coe.ufl.edu">www.coe.ufl.edu</a>	Offers ongoing support for data facilitation and conducts special trainings for data facilitators
Irene E. and George A. Davis Foundation <a href="http://www.davisfdn.org">www.davisfdn.org</a>	Funds colleges in Massachusetts (Round 4)
Kamehameha Schools <a href="http://www.ksbe.edu">www.ksbe.edu</a>	Funds colleges in Hawaii (Round 4)
KnowledgeWorks Foundation <a href="http://www.kwfdn.org">www.kwfdn.org</a>	Funds Ohio colleges (Round 2) and works with Jobs for the Future on the policy work in Ohio
Lloyd G. Balfour Foundation <a href="http://www.bankofamerica.com/grantmakingsolutions">www.bankofamerica.com/grantmakingsolutions</a>	Funds colleges in Massachusetts (Round 4)
Nellie Mae Education Foundation <a href="http://www.nmefdn.org">www.nmefdn.org</a>	Funds colleges in Connecticut (Round 2)
Office of Hawaiian Affairs <a href="http://www.oha.org">www.oha.org</a>	Funds colleges in Hawaii (Round 4)
Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education <a href="http://www.okhighered.org">www.okhighered.org</a>	Funds colleges in Oklahoma (Round 4)
Palmetto Institute <a href="http://www.palmettoinstitute.org">www.palmettoinstitute.org</a>	Coordinates external partners, who provide supplemental funding to colleges in South Carolina (Round 4)
South Carolina Technical College System <a href="http://www.sctechsystem.com">www.sctechsystem.com</a>	Funds colleges in South Carolina (Round 4)
TERI <a href="http://www.teri.org">www.teri.org</a>	Funds colleges in Massachusetts (Round 4)
University of Hawai'i Community College System <a href="http://www.hawaii.edu/offices/cc/index.html">http://www.hawaii.edu/offices/cc/index.html</a>	Funds colleges in Hawaii (Round 4)
W.K. Kellogg Foundation <a href="http://www.wkfk.org">www.wkfk.org</a>	Funds colleges in Michigan (Round 4)
Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation <a href="http://www.wrfoundation.org">www.wrfoundation.org</a>	Funds colleges in Arkansas (Round 4)

- *Within community colleges*, by increasing their capability to gather and analyze data on the academic needs and progress of their students and to use these data to inform decisions on how to strengthen classroom teaching, student services, and other college programs to raise academic achievement
- *In public policy*, by encouraging lawmakers and higher education officials to consider changes in laws or to adopt new policies that may help community college students succeed, such as increasing financial aid for part-time students and creating better alignment between the course offerings of two- and four-year colleges to facilitate transfer
- *In reliable information*, by supporting rigorous research on factors that contribute to or impede success of community college students and on effective strategies to boost academic achievement
- *Among the public at-large*, by increasing awareness of the work community colleges do and engaging people in supporting their mission
- *Among national organizations that represent, support, and study community colleges*, by promoting regular meetings, information sharing, and collaboration in their work

The partners recognized that effecting change in any sector — especially one as large and decentralized as community colleges — is a major undertaking. Accordingly, their plans called for a significant investment of resources and time. To date, Lumina has invested \$74 million in Achieving the Dream, and other funders have contributed millions more. The partners projected that their work together would last at least 10 years.

## **Theory of Action: How Achieving the Dream Is Expected to Boost Student Performance**

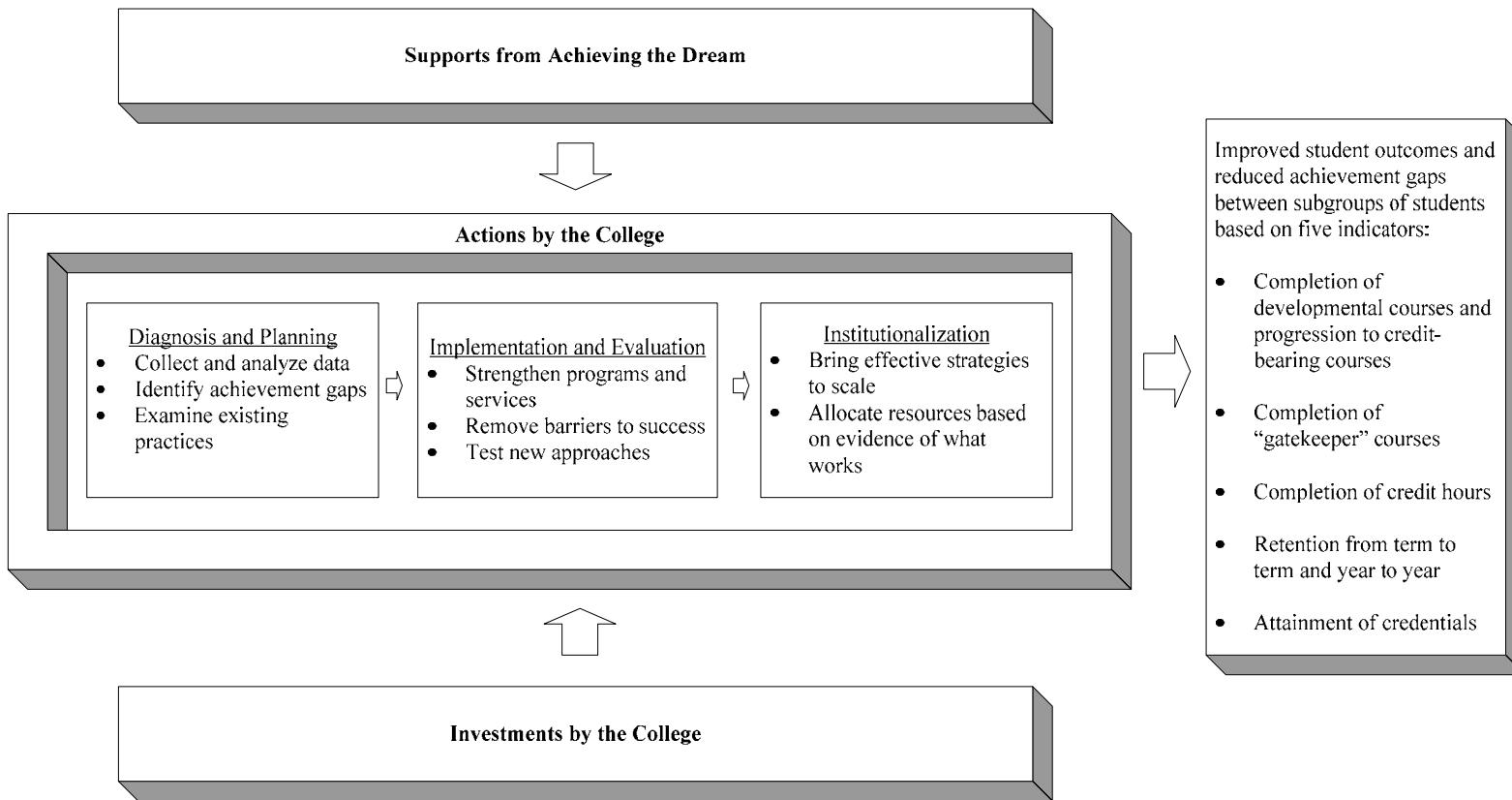
This report is focused on the work that is taking place within community colleges to build a “culture of evidence” — that is, to gather, analyze, and use data to transform their practices and cultures in order to help more students succeed. The initiative’s Integrated Action Plan describes the means and processes through which this transformation is to occur (see Figure 1.2 for a schematic).

A helpful starting point is to understand the kinds of data community colleges typically collect on their students and how they normally use such data. At most institutions, incoming students state their educational goals and provide personal information, such as age, gender, and

## Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count

Figure 1.2

### Theory of Action for the Achieving the Dream Initiative



race/ethnicity, on their application forms. Once students are enrolled, colleges maintain extensive records on courses attempted and completed, grades earned, and certificates or degrees awarded. Because community colleges derive their funding based on enrollment numbers, they are adept at compiling such information to show the number and characteristics of students attending the college overall and in specific academic programs. Community colleges also document the number of certificates and degrees conferred each year. It is much less common, however, for community colleges to track students over time to see whether they are staying enrolled and making steady progress toward degrees or to perform more detailed analyses to determine whether some groups of students (for example, male students of color) are experiencing more difficulty than others in completing courses or finishing degrees.

The community colleges participating in Achieving the Dream agree to examine student records more thoroughly to identify trends and potential problems in academic performance. Specifically, they are expected to perform two kinds of analyses: (1) *longitudinal analysis*, in which entering cohorts of students are tracked from semester to semester to determine what percentage are staying in school and achieving critical benchmarks, such as completing developmental courses and advancing to a college-level curriculum; and (2) *analysis by subgroup*, to determine whether students in various, ethnic or racial, income, and other categories are achieving success at comparable rates or whether there are gaps in their achievement levels. To complement this work, community colleges are also encouraged to gather feedback from students, faculty, and staff about classroom experiences and other aspects of campus life that might affect academic performance. Feedback may take the form of surveys, such as the Community College Survey of Student Engagement,<sup>8</sup> or qualitative interviews and focus groups.

Achieving the Dream provides considerable financial and professional support to participating colleges to enable them to perform these analyses successfully and take the next, more important step in building a culture of evidence: to *apply* what they have learned by strengthening college programs and services and removing impediments to student success. The financial support includes a one-year, \$50,000 planning grant, followed by a four-year, \$400,000 implementation grant. The latter is intended to help colleges try new strategies to boost student achievement and to continue with data collection and analysis to learn whether such strategies are working.

The professional support given to the colleges includes two outside consultants, paid for by the initiative, who play an ongoing advisory role. The first, known as a *data facilitator*, is a

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<sup>8</sup>The Community College Survey of Student Engagement is a national survey administered since 2001 to community college students that assesses institutional practices and student behaviors that are correlated highly with student learning and student retention. Participation by community colleges is voluntary; in 2007, 284 colleges participated. For more information, visit the Web site: [www.ccsse.org](http://www.ccsse.org).

research expert who helps the college fulfill the technical requirements of Achieving the Dream — in particular, the longitudinal and subgroup analyses. The data facilitator also provides guidance on how to use other tools and methods to gain student, faculty, and staff perspectives; how to interpret and present data; and how to evaluate the effectiveness of college programs and services. The second consultant, known as a *coach*, is usually a former community college president who has a track record of institutional leadership and data-driven decision-making. The coach’s role is to help the leadership teams at the participating colleges draw lessons from their data analyses, determine how best to communicate the results to faculty and the public (particularly when the results are unflattering), and develop and implement plans for improving student performance. Each college receives 12 days from a data facilitator and 12 days of consulting from a coach during the planning year, and the same number of days during the first implementation year. After that, the number of days gradually reduces to three days from a data facilitator and three days from a coach by the fourth implementation year.

The coaching and data facilitation efforts are complemented by regular meetings in which all the Achieving the Dream partners and colleges come together to reinforce the goals of the initiative and share information. Upon receiving a planning grant, colleges attend a kickoff meeting in the summer, followed by annual Strategy Institutes every winter. These events include presentations by the partners and other experts on topics relevant to Achieving the Dream, such as the latest research on strategies to improve developmental education. The kickoff meetings and Strategy Institutes also foster team-building within and across colleges, allowing faculty and administrators to meet with their peers and talk about the issues they are facing outside the workaday pressures of their institutions.

The grants, data facilitation and coaching, and conferences provided by Achieving the Dream serve as external levers to promote change within the colleges, but ultimately it is the responsibility of each college to devote the attention and resources needed to make change happen. Commitment from the college president is a precondition for joining Achieving the Dream, and he or she is expected to stay involved throughout the initiative. Most important, the president is expected to articulate a vision for academic success and equity for all students. In addition to the president, colleges are expected to appoint teams made up of top administrators, institutional researchers, faculty, staff, and possibly representatives from the community (such as business leaders or public school officials) to carry out the initiative. The initiative’s Integrated Action Plan called for colleges to create a “data team” made up of institutional researchers and faculty to do the data collection and analysis and a “core team” made up of the president and other top leaders of the college to make policy decisions and plan and implement changes in college programs and services (see Figure 1.3).<sup>9</sup> The two-team structure, which roughly corre-

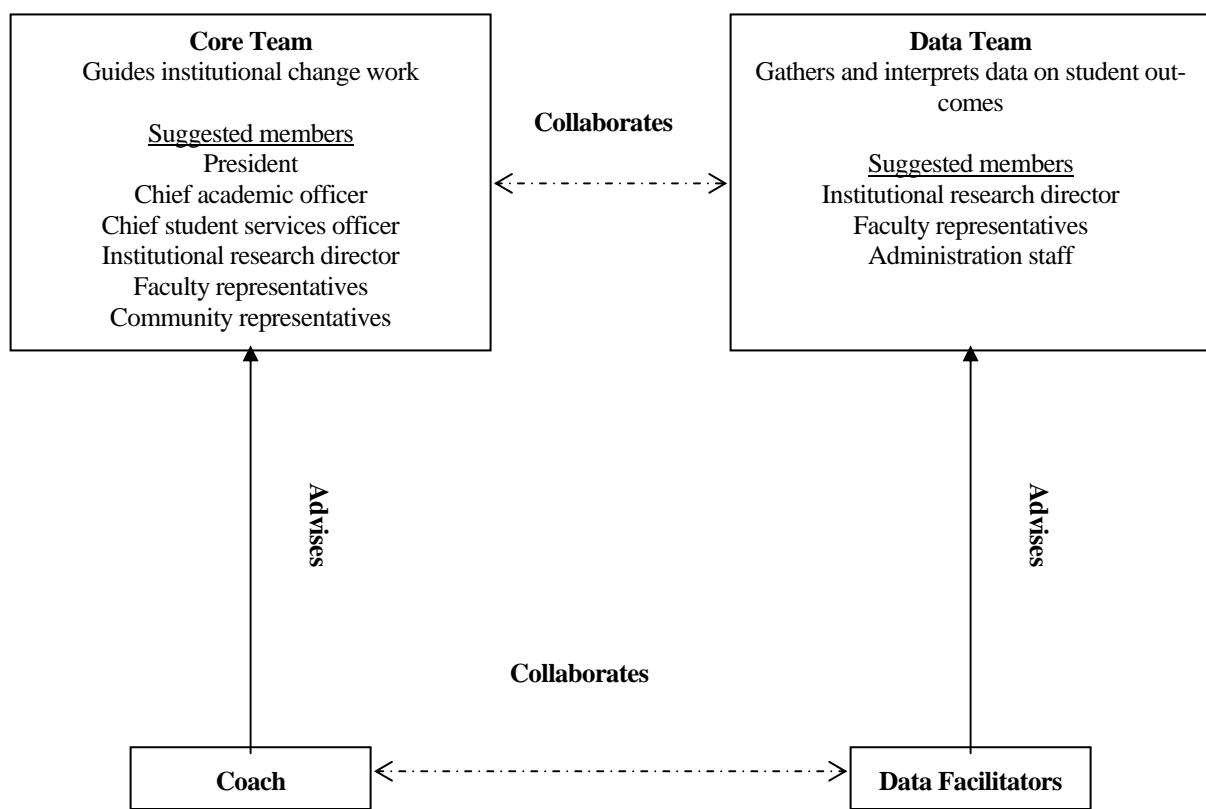
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<sup>9</sup>MDC, Inc. (2006b).

## Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count

Figure 1.3

### Relationships Among College Teams, Coaches, and Data Facilitators



sponded to the work of the data facilitator and coach, was viewed as an efficient way to divide responsibilities within the college. More recently, the colleges have been allowed to merge the data and core team functions into a single committee if they prefer.

Whatever team structure a college chooses, the people leading the initiative at each college are expected to enlist as many colleagues in the work of Achieving the Dream as possible. Faculty members are seen as critical players, but so are the staff who keep the college running — everyone from admissions officers to groundskeepers. Students may also play a role in collecting data and recommending changes in the college. As stated in an initiative framing paper, “institutions . . . are not creatures that think and act of their own accord. They are made up of people whose beliefs, attitudes, and values determine the policies and practices of the institution.”<sup>10</sup> In short, Achieving the Dream takes the position that everyone at the college plays a part in helping students succeed.

The process of institutional change within the college is expected to occur in three stages:

- *Diagnosis and planning.* Colleges use longitudinal student cohort data and other evidence to identify gaps in academic achievement and develop strategies for addressing gaps. A key premise is that once administrators, faculty, and staff see that certain groups are not doing well, they will be motivated to rethink existing practices and work to remove barriers to student success.
- *Implementation and evaluation.* Administrators, faculty, and staff will design and implement strategies that address these priority areas, paying close attention to assessing the outcomes of their strategies and using the results to make further refinements or discard strategies that are not working. Possible strategies include adopting new curricula for developmental courses, training faculty in pedagogical techniques, expanding or upgrading tutoring facilities, revamping orientation programs for freshmen, and creating more intensive academic advising. Colleges are expected to identify appropriate comparison groups to determine whether students who receive a new program or service do better on course completion, persistence, or other measures than students who do not receive the intervention.
- *Institutionalization.* Over time, colleges will focus their efforts on institutionalizing effective policies and practices. They will pay particular attention to how resources are allocated to bring to scale and sustain proven strategies. Program planning, budgeting, and review will be driven by evidence of what works best for students.

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<sup>10</sup>MDC, Inc. (2006a).

The end result of this work — and the ultimate rationale for the initiative — is to boost student performance. Indicators of success — such as the percentage of students completing developmental coursework, persisting in school, and completing certificates or degrees — will gradually rise. Gaps in achievement levels among various racial or ethnic and income groups will start to narrow and eventually be eliminated. If the theory of action is correct, the biggest gains should come from colleges that fully embrace the use of data, that engage faculty and other members of the campus community in developing solutions to identified problems, and that make improvements in programs and services that are permanent and affect large numbers of students.

## **Selection and Characteristics of the Achieving the Dream Colleges**

When Achieving the Dream was first launched, the national partners decided to concentrate on groups of community colleges in several states, rather than to make grants to institutions nationwide. The rationale was that policy decisions affecting community colleges are made mainly at the state level and that the initiative would have greater success in getting government actors involved — and influencing policy — if there were a critical mass of institutions in a selected group of states. Florida, New Mexico, North Carolina, Texas, and Virginia were chosen for the first round of grant-making because they serve large portions of low-income students and students of color and had favorable climates for policy change. Each of these states also appeared to have relatively stable political and fiscal environments and could be counted on to “stay the course” once the initiative got started.

The national partners also decided that the initiative should focus on community colleges that serve the largest numbers of disadvantaged students. Using data compiled by the U.S. Department of Education, they identified community colleges in the selected states in which at least one out of three students were African-American, Hispanic, or Native American and/or at least one out of two students had low incomes (as defined by Pell Grant receipt). Based on these criteria, approximately 100 institutions in the five states were eligible to participate in Achieving the Dream. All were invited to apply, and 60 submitted applications.

The selection of colleges was competitive. Representatives from the national partners and several independent reviewers scored the proposals based on four criteria: (1) the strength of the core teams that the colleges proposed to lead the initiative; (2) the colleges’ stated commitment to the goals of the initiative — in particular, to developing a “culture of evidence”; (3) a description of at least three programs or strategies that the colleges had implemented to increase student achievement; and (4) the colleges’ vision for how participation in the initiative would lead to improvements in student outcomes. In addition, the colleges were asked to present basic data on enrollment and graduation rates for all students and disaggregated by race and ethnicity — to see whether they could perform some of the types of analysis that would be re-

quired for Achieving the Dream. However, the colleges' ability to break down their data by subgroup was not a selection criterion.

The 27 colleges selected for Round 1 are diverse in size, location, and student characteristics (see Table 1.3 and Appendix Tables A.1 to A.5). They are located in large and midsize cities, suburbs, and small towns. The largest institution is Houston Community College, with a full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment of more than 21,000 students. The smallest enrollment is at Martin Community College in North Carolina, with an FTE enrollment of 615 students.

At all the colleges, female students are in the majority. White students make up a majority or plurality of students at most institutions, but nearly all the colleges enroll substantial numbers of African-American, Hispanic, and/or Native American students. Not surprisingly, the racial and ethnic composition of each of the colleges reflects the demographic characteristics of their states. For example, the colleges with the highest percentage of Hispanic students are located in Texas and New Mexico. The colleges with the highest percentage of African-American students tend to be located in Virginia, North Carolina, and Florida. In New Mexico, two Achieving the Dream colleges predominantly enroll Native American students. Part-time students are in the majority at nearly all the colleges.

With four exceptions, the majority of students at all the colleges receive financial aid. (One of the exceptions, Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute in New Mexico, is federally subsidized and has no tuition and low fees.) More than 75 percent of students receive financial aid at 10 institutions located primarily in New Mexico and Texas. For students receiving aid, the average federal grant ranges from \$1,200 to approximately \$3,500. Aid amounts correlate with the cost of attending an institution and, therefore, are not a perfect indicator of which colleges are serving the students with the greatest financial need. Moreover, for a variety of reasons, not all financially needy students apply for or receive Pell Grants.

## **Evaluation Methodology**

MDRC and the Community College Research Center (CCRC) are collaborating on the Achieving the Dream evaluation. For this report, the evaluation team visited all 27 Round 1 colleges in spring 2006. At each institution, evaluators interviewed key personnel involved with the initiative, including college presidents, vice presidents, deans, institutional researchers, and faculty members. The interviews covered a range of topics, including the goals of Achieving the Dream, lessons learned from the college's data analysis, and steps taken to implement strategies to improve student outcomes. The evaluators also interviewed a few faculty members on each campus who were *not* directly involved in the initiative, to gauge their awareness of Achieving the Dream and general perceptions of campus life. Most interviews were conducted individually or in small groups and lasted about an hour. The interviews followed a protocol to make sure

**Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count**

**Table 1.3**

**Round 1 Colleges, Academic Year 2004-2005**

State/College	Location	Enrollment <sup>a</sup>
<b><u>Florida</u></b>		
Broward Community College	Fort Lauderdale	17,784
Hillsborough Community College	Tampa	12,043
Tallahassee Community College	Tallahassee	8,486
Valencia Community College	Orlando	17,864
<b><u>New Mexico</u></b>		
Central New Mexico Community College	Albuquerque	12,276
New Mexico State University-Doña Ana	Las Cruces	3,328
San Juan College	Farmington	3,525
Santa Fe Community College	Santa Fe	1,915
Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute	Albuquerque	658
University of New Mexico-Gallup	Gallup	1,749
<b><u>North Carolina</u></b>		
Durham Technical Community College	Durham	2,857
Guilford Technical Community College	Jamestown	4,797
Martin Community College	Williamston	615
Wayne Community College	Goldsboro	1,835
<b><u>Texas</u></b>		
Alamo Community College District <sup>b</sup>		
Northwest Vista College	San Antonio	4,927
Palo Alto College	San Antonio	4,625
San Antonio College	San Antonio	12,226
St. Philips College	San Antonio	6,451
Brookhaven College	Farmers Branch	5,586
Coastal Bend College	Beeville	2,536
El Paso Community College	El Paso	15,922
Galveston College	Galveston	1,379
Houston Community College System	Houston	21,454
South Texas College	McAllen	10,039
Southwest Texas Junior College	Uvalde	3,216

(continued)

**Table 1.3 (continued)**

State/College	Location	Enrollment <sup>a</sup>
<b>Virginia</b>		
Danville Community College	Danville	2,244
Mountain Empire Community College	Big Stone Gap	1,785
Patrick Henry Community College	Martinsville	1,989
Paul D. Camp Community College	Franklin	722
Tidewater Community College	Norfolk	12,598

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).

NOTES: <sup>a</sup>Full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment numbers are shown.

<sup>b</sup>Four colleges in the Alamo Community College District are participating in Achieving the Dream. The district is the recipient of the Achieving the Dream grant.

that similar questions were asked of comparable people at all institutions. The notes generated from these interviews were coded and entered into a qualitative data management software package to facilitate retrieval and analysis. To protect confidentiality, names of individual respondents or colleges are not identified in this report.

In addition to the qualitative research, MDRC and CCRC analyzed data on student outcomes that the colleges submitted to a centralized Achieving the Dream database. The outcomes included completion of developmental courses in math, English, and reading; completion of “gatekeeper” courses (that is, the first college-level courses) in English and math; the ratio of completed credits to attempted credits; persistence from semester to semester and year to year; and completion of certificates, diplomas, or associate’s degrees. These measures reflect student outcomes at baseline, before the colleges implemented changes in policies or programs as a result of their data analysis. The evaluation team examined outcomes for all students and sub-groups defined by race/ethnicity, gender, Pell Grant receipt (as a proxy for low-income status), and referral to developmental courses. The results are presented as averages across all Achieving the Dream colleges so that trends in large colleges do not overwhelm trends in smaller colleges. This also provides a clearer perspective on the challenges facing the initiative as a whole.

Much more information will be collected for future reports. The MDRC and CCRC team will return to all 27 colleges in 2009 to conduct a second round of interviews with core team members and other informants and will administer two rounds of surveys with college administrators and faculty in 2007 and 2009. The main purposes of the interviews and surveys will be to understand how the initiative has evolved and to capture changes in practices and atti-

tudes. The evaluation team will also continue to use the centralized Achieving the Dream database to establish trend lines in student performance over the course of the initiative.

At selected institutions, MDRC will conduct rigorous evaluations of specific programs or strategies that colleges have developed to improve student outcomes. A major purpose of this work is to build evidence on successful practices that other colleges can adopt, whether or not they receive an Achieving the Dream grant. At other selected colleges, there will be a study of the financial cost to institutions of participating in Achieving the Dream and an ethnographic study of students to capture their views and experiences. The findings from this research will be released in a series of reports over the next four years, with a final report planned for 2010.

## **Organization of This Report**

The remainder of this report is organized as follows. Chapter 2 presents findings on how students are faring at the colleges at baseline, before the colleges had begun making changes in their culture or operations. Chapter 3 describes the efforts the colleges are making to build a “culture of evidence” that gathers, analyzes, and uses data to inform decision-making. Chapter 4 examines how college presidents and other individuals responsible for Achieving the Dream on each campus are working to engage faculty and other members of the community in the initiative. Chapter 5 describes the major programmatic strategies that colleges have chosen to improve academic outcomes for students. Chapter 6 concludes with an assessment of progress to date and of the efforts that the colleges are making to institutionalize and sustain the initiative.

## Chapter 2

# Baseline Performance Among Round 1 Colleges

### Introduction

At the outset of the initiative, the Achieving the Dream partners established five main performance indicators for participating colleges. These are the rates at which a college's students:<sup>1</sup>

1. Successfully complete remedial or developmental courses and progress to credit-bearing courses
2. Enroll in and successfully complete college-level “gatekeeper” courses
3. Complete the courses they take, with a grade of C or higher
4. Reenroll from one semester to the next
5. Earn certificates and/or degrees

In choosing these five, the partners sought indicators that most community colleges can readily measure.<sup>2</sup> Also, because it often takes a long time for community college students to earn credentials, the partners sought to include indicators of intermediate progress or milestones. For example, since a substantial proportion of degree-seeking community college students take at least one developmental course and many developmental students do not advance to college-level coursework,<sup>3</sup> the partners included an indicator of the rate at which students complete developmental coursework. Other studies have shown that relatively few community college students pass the first college-level courses in math and English, but those who do complete these “gatekeepers” are much more likely to graduate.<sup>4</sup> Hence, the partners included gatekeeper-course completion as an intermediate performance indicator. Course completion rates and persistence rates are the two other such intermediate indicators selected.

Achieving the Dream expects that, through the activities colleges undertake as part of the initiative, they will be able to increase the rates at which their students succeed on the five indicators. The colleges are also expected to close any substantial gaps in performance on the indicators among different groups of students, such as racial or ethnic minorities.

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<sup>1</sup>MDC, Inc. (2006a).

<sup>2</sup>Thus, for example, no indicators were required for rates of baccalaureate transfer or labor market success. Even though transfer and workforce development are two important community college missions, tracking transfers and labor market outcomes is often difficult for community colleges.

<sup>3</sup>See, for example, Attewell, Lavin, Domina, and Levey (2006).

<sup>4</sup>Adelman (2004, 2006); Calcagno, Crosta, Bailey, and Jenkins (Forthcoming, 2007).

JBL Associates, a higher education consulting firm, is compiling the Achieving the Dream database with data from all of the participating colleges. These data, which will be used to measure progress on the five indicators, include demographic characteristics, transcript information, and associate's degrees and certificates for fall cohorts of first-time, credential-seeking students at each college.<sup>5</sup> The colleges are submitting regular updates on each cohort, which will make it possible to track the outcomes for the students over the course of the initiative.

This chapter presents data on the participating colleges' performance *prior* to joining Achieving the Dream on measures constructed for each of the five performance indicators. These baseline data will also be used to gauge the progress of participating colleges. By the end of the four-year implementation phase, which runs from fall 2005 through summer 2009, the 27 Round 1 colleges will have submitted at least two years of data on six fall cohorts of first-time students — three who enrolled before the implementation phase (fall 2002, fall 2003, and fall 2004) and three after (fall 2005, fall 2006, and fall 2007). This will make it possible to compare the rates on each measure for the cohorts of students who enrolled before the start of the implementation phase with those of students who enrolled after the implementation.

Achieving the Dream expects each college both to improve outcomes on the indicators by its students overall and to narrow the gaps in attainment among different groups of students. Therefore, the statistics presented in this section are based on averages of the rates for each college, not for the pooled sample of all students. This statistical approach also makes it easier to identify trends across the 27 colleges. Each college is weighted equally, regardless of the size of enrollment.

The average rates for the Round 1 colleges on most of the Achieving the Dream performance measures are low. On average, slightly more than one in ten students at these colleges earned a certificate or an associate's degree after three years. At the same time, there was considerable variation among the colleges in the rates for most of the measures. Whether this means that some of the colleges were more effective than others, or that colleges with higher rates were serving more advantaged student populations, cannot be discerned from these data.

The data also reveal gaps in the rates of achievement among student subgroups. For example, the average rate of completing an associate's degree was significantly lower, statistically,

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<sup>5</sup>According to the instruction manual that JBL Associates provided to the colleges to guide them in collecting the data: "If your institution determines degree intent upon entry, only degree-seeking students should be included in your initial cohort. Institutions that do not determine degree intent upon entry should report all students as if they are degree-seeking. In all cases, students whose intent is not known are to be reported in the degree-seeking cohort."

for black, Hispanic, and Native American students than for white students.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, the average rates of persistence (that is, measures of staying in school) were higher for Hispanic students than for whites.<sup>7</sup> This suggests that some colleges may want to consider steps to help Hispanic students “accelerate” their progress and thus reduce the time to earning a degree. In contrast, the rates at which black students persisted were not significantly different than those for whites.

Surprisingly, the average rates on most measures across the Round 1 colleges were higher for Pell Grant recipients than for students who did not receive Pell Grants, although there was not a statistically significant difference between the two groups in the rates of credential completion.

As expected, the average success rates for students who were referred to developmental instruction were significantly lower on several key measures of success (including completion of gatekeeper courses, completion of courses generally, and the attainment of an associate’s degree) than for those who were considered ready for college-level courses. One exception is persistence, where the average rates were generally higher for students referred to developmental instruction than for students not referred. It is possible that, given a longer time frame, the gap in credential completion between those referred to remediation and those not referred could narrow.

The next section of this chapter presents statistics for the fall 2002 first-time student cohort, the first for which data on the Round 1 colleges are being collected. The following section examines whether there are gaps among student groups in the rates of achievement across the participating colleges. Because Achieving the Dream is particularly concerned about student groups who have faced the most significant barriers to success, the chapter examines whether there are gaps in the rates for students by race and ethnicity and by whether or not they received a Pell Grant (with the latter serving as a proxy for family income). In addition, since so many community college students arrive unprepared for college work, it also explores whether there are differences in attainment based on whether students have been referred to developmental instruction or not.

The concluding section summarizes the plan for measuring changes in the performance indicators over the four-year implementation phase. Appendix B describes issues encountered with the Achieving the Dream data and defines variables created for this analysis.

## Baseline Performance Rates by College

Table 2.1 lists the measures constructed for each of the five Achieving the Dream performance indicators, along with statistics on each measure for the participating colleges. The

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<sup>6</sup>Because the baseline database uses the racial/ethnic category of “black, non-Hispanic,” this chapter uses the term “black” rather than “African-American.”

<sup>7</sup>The difference is statistically significant for two of the three persistence measures.

**Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count**

**Table 2.1**

**Average Institutional Rates on Achieving the Dream Performance Indicators at Round 1 Colleges,  
Fall 2002 Cohort, Three-Year Outcomes**

	Mean Value (%)	Standard Deviation (%) <sup>a</sup>	Minimum Value (%) <sup>b</sup>	Maximum Value (%) <sup>c</sup>	Number of Institutions Reporting
<b><u>Developmental courses<sup>d</sup></u></b>					
Successful completion of highest-level developmental math course	28.9	12.0	5.7	48.9	22
Successful completion of highest-level developmental English course	35.7	16.5	5.1	68.0	22
Successful completion of highest-level developmental reading course	37.0	17.5	4.7	66.6	23
<b><u>Gatekeeper courses</u></b>					
Successful completion of gatekeeper math course <sup>e</sup>	20.5	7.9	6.8	32.9	22
Successful completion of gatekeeper English course <sup>f</sup>	30.1	8.6	15.6	46.0	23
<b><u>Course completion</u></b>					
Ratio of completed credits to attempted credits <sup>g</sup>	70.1	9.5	51.9	92.3	29
<b><u>Persistence</u></b>					
Enrolled in the first semester after the initial term of enrollment <sup>h</sup>	70.4	5.7	51.2	79.5	29
Enrolled in at least one semester in the second year <sup>i</sup>	48.2	6.2	35.5	64.0	29
Enrolled in at least one semester in each of the first three years	23.1	5.9	11.4	38.1	29
<b><u>Completions</u></b>					
Completed a credential or enrolled in the third year <sup>j</sup>	39.5	6.7	25.4	50.7	28
Completed a credential by the end of the third year	10.8	6.8	1.6	27.6	28
Completed an associate's degree	7.3	4.6	0.9	19.1	28
Completed a certificate or diploma	3.5	3.6	0.4	16.3	28
Enrolled in at least one semester in the third year	28.7	6.4	14.3	43.8	28

(continued)

### Table 2.1 (continued)

SOURCE: MDRC calculations using the Achieving the Dream database.

NOTES: Calculations for this table use all available data for sample members in the fall 2002 cohort at Round 1 Achieving the Dream colleges, which includes 66,129 students at 29 colleges. Figures represent average institutional rates.

Alamo Community College District is considered one site for the Achieving the Dream initiative, but it has 4 colleges that report data separately to the database. Hence, the number of colleges exceeds 27.

Some colleges did not report into the database on some measures.

Data were not submitted for the fall 2002 cohort at Guilford Technical Community College.

<sup>a</sup>The standard deviation is a calculated variable measure of the dispersion of values around the mean.

<sup>b</sup>The minimum value is the lowest rate calculated among institutions reporting data.

<sup>c</sup>The maximum value is the highest rate calculated among institutions reporting data.

<sup>d</sup>The pool of colleges for which outcomes were calculated includes only those submitting data on whether students were referred to developmental coursework. Completion rates of developmental coursework were calculated only for students in this group. Grades of C or better must be earned to have completed a course successfully.

<sup>e</sup>The gatekeeper math course is the first college-level math course at the college. The completion rate calculations include students for whom both referral data and grades in gatekeeper courses were available. Refer to Appendix B for more details on the sample used in this calculation. Grades of C or better must be earned to have completed a course successfully.

<sup>f</sup>The gatekeeper English course is the first college-level English course at the college. The completion rate calculations include students for whom both referral data and grades in gatekeeper courses were available. Refer to Appendix B for more details on the sample used in this calculation. Grades of C or better must be earned to have completed a course successfully.

<sup>g</sup>In some cases, credits completed may exceed the value of credits attempted. This phenomenon is a result of students' having earned credits through other means, such as examination.

<sup>h</sup>The initial term of enrollment is fall 2002. The first term after the initial term is spring 2003.

<sup>i</sup>For the fall 2002 cohort, the second year is academic year 2003-2004.

<sup>j</sup>For the fall 2002 cohort, the third year is academic year 2004-2005. A credential is defined as either an associate's degree, a certificate, or a diploma.

statistics are based on institutional averages for the fall 2002 cohort of first-time college students tracked over three years, before Achieving the Dream was launched. These are the sorts of statistics that the Achieving the Dream colleges generate internally as they track cohorts of students over time to identify “leakage points,” where students founder, as well as “milestones” beyond which students are more likely to succeed.

Turning to the first set of measures, the average rate at which students completed developmental instruction at the Round 1 colleges was lowest for developmental math — about 29 percent, compared with 36 percent for developmental English and 37 percent for developmental reading. However, across subject areas, the developmental completion rate varied widely among the colleges, ranging from 6 percent to nearly 50 percent in math and about 5 percent to over 66 percent for English and reading.

Similarly, as discussed below (Table 2.6), the average completion rate for first college-level, or gatekeeper, mathematics courses was about 20 percent; for gatekeeper English, the mean rate was just over 30 percent. Here the variation among colleges was not as great as with the developmental completion rates. Not surprisingly, the average rates at which students completed gatekeeper courses were lower for students who were referred to developmental instruction (usually based on a placement test taken at entry) than among those who were not referred to remediation. The gatekeeper math completion rate for students deemed in need of remediation was less than half that for students who were considered prepared for college-level work. The difference in average completion rates between students referred to developmental education and those not referred was not as wide for gatekeeper English.

Interestingly, the variation in gatekeeper math completion rates for the colleges was much greater for students who were *not* referred to remediation than among those who were referred (not shown in tables). This might reflect differences among the colleges in developmental placement policies, with some colleges having less stringent standards for placement into college-level programs, so that some students were allowed to take college-level courses who, in fact, needed remediation.

The average course completion rate among the colleges was around 70 percent, although it ranged from 52 percent to 92 percent. There was also variation in the rates of persistence. The rate of persistence from the first semester to the second semester ranged from 51 percent to nearly 80 percent. The average rate at which students enrolled in at least one semester in all three years was only 23 percent. Research suggests that students who enroll continuously from one semester to the next are, not surprisingly, more likely to graduate than are students

whose enrollment is intermittent.<sup>8</sup> At the Round 1 colleges, an average of three-quarters of students enrolled intermittently and were therefore at greater risk of dropping out completely.

Given the seemingly low rates on the intermediate, or milestone, measures, it is perhaps not surprising that the average rate at which students completed a certificate or associate's degree within three years was just over 10 percent.<sup>9</sup> The variation in credential completion rates was considerable, ranging from less than 2 percent to over 27 percent. The variation on these completion measures and on the intermediate measures could indicate that some colleges are more effectively serving their students. It could also mean that the colleges with higher rates on these measures are serving a more advantaged student population. By themselves, these data do not provide enough insight to choose among competing explanations for the patterns observed. To get a better understanding of what is going on requires "drilling down" into the data, and this is what the Achieving the Dream colleges do when they compare attainment on the various measures by different groups of students.

## **Gaps in Baseline Institutional Performance Rates Among Student Groups**

To qualify for participation in Achieving the Dream, colleges had to serve relatively high percentages of students who have traditionally faced barriers to success, including students of color or low-income students. This section examines whether, on average, the Round 1 colleges had attainment gaps on the indicator measures among students grouped by race and ethnicity and by whether or not they received a Pell Grant — as well as by whether they had been referred to developmental instruction or placed directly in college-level courses. The Achieving the Dream colleges were urged to do this sort of "gap analysis" on the premise that they could not expect to improve outcomes for students overall without identifying and addressing disparities in attainment for particular student groups.

The statistics presented in the following tables are based on averages of the institutional rates on each measure for the fall 2002 first-time student cohort tracked over three years — that is, before the initiative began. Tests were applied to determine whether the differences in the rates by group are statistically significant.

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<sup>8</sup>Adelman (2004).

<sup>9</sup>It should be noted that, to qualify for participation in Achieving the Dream, colleges had to have a relatively high proportion of minority students or of Pell Grant recipients (the latter was used as a proxy for the proportion of low-income students). Because their students tend to be more disadvantaged on average than those of many community colleges, the average rates for these colleges on the performance measures will likely be lower than they would be for community colleges generally.

## **Gaps in Institutional Performance Rates Analyzed by Race and Ethnicity**

Table 2.2 shows the average institutional rates for the Achieving the Dream performance measures as analyzed by race and ethnicity. The respective rates on each measure for Asian-Americans, blacks, Hispanics, and Native Americans are compared with those for whites. A plus or minus sign in parentheses after each rate indicates whether the given rate for the particular racial or ethnic group is more or less than that of whites. The asterisks indicate whether the difference between the rate for the given racial or ethnic group and that for whites is statistically significant.

Looking at the measures for developmental course completion, although there was some variation in average rates across the Round 1 colleges by race or ethnicity, the differences are not statistically significant. In contrast, there are significant differences in the average institutional rates of completion of the first college-level, or gatekeeper, courses. Specifically, the average gatekeeper math completion rate for Asians (36.5 percent) was significantly higher, statistically, than that for whites (22.3 percent), while the rate for blacks (15.5 percent) was significantly lower. These findings are not surprising. At the same time, there were no significant “gaps” in completion rates for gatekeeper English courses, on average, across the colleges.

It would be interesting to see whether the gaps by race and ethnicity in the completion of gatekeeper mathematics courses are also evident in a comparison of students who actually *took* developmental math courses, not just those who were *referred* to remediation in math. If the gaps are still present, this might suggest that colleges consider rethinking their approach to math developmental instruction for racial or ethnic groups with significantly lower rates of completion. If the gaps are not as salient in the gatekeeper course outcomes for students who *took* developmental instruction, colleges might want to examine their policies and practices for *placing* students in developmental education.

The rates of successful course completion across the Round 1 colleges were significantly lower, on average, for blacks and Hispanics than for whites. Moreover, the rates at which blacks and Hispanics completed an associate’s degree were also significantly lower than that for whites. At the same time, the average retention rate for Hispanics was actually significantly *higher* than that for whites, while there was no statistically significant difference between the average institutional rates for blacks and whites. These findings suggest that colleges might consider ways to accelerate degree completion by Hispanic students. (Strategies to decrease the time to degrees might also make sense for Asian students, who had higher average persistence rates than whites across the colleges, although there were not significant differences in degree completion rates for Asians and whites.) Colleges with degree completion gaps between blacks and whites probably need to find ways to increase persistence among black students.

**Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count**  
**Table 2.2**  
**Average Institutional Rates on Achieving the Dream Performance Indicators at Round 1 Colleges,  
by Race/Ethnicity,<sup>a</sup> Fall 2002 Cohort, Three-Year Outcomes**

	White, Non-Hispanic	Asian, Pacific Islander	Black, Non-Hispanic	Hispanic	Native American
<b><u>Developmental courses<sup>b</sup></u></b>					
Successful completion of highest-level developmental math course	28.7	39.9 (+)	25.6 (-)	28.9 (+)	31.4 (+)
Successful completion of highest-level developmental English course	34.5	37.5 (+)	35.7 (+)	35.9 (+)	42.4 (+)
Successful completion of highest-level developmental reading course	38.3	47.9 (+)	38.9 (+)	36.9 (-)	28.4 (-)
<b><u>Gatekeeper courses</u></b>					
Successful completion of gatekeeper math course <sup>c</sup>	22.3	36.5 (+) ***	15.5 (-) **	19.2 (-)	21.6 (-)
Successful completion of gatekeeper English course <sup>d</sup>	30.0	36.0 (+)	29.0 (-)	32.1 (+)	27.0 (-)
<b><u>Course completion</u></b>					
Ratio of completed credits to attempted credits <sup>e</sup>	73.6	77.3 (+)	66.9 (-) **	65.4 (-) ***	69.4 (-)
<b><u>Persistence</u></b>					
Enrolled in first the semester after the initial term of enrollment <sup>f</sup>	70.4	71.6 (+)	69.4 (-)	70.6 (+)	71.1 (+)
Enrolled in at least one semester in the second year <sup>g</sup>	46.5	61.7 (+) ***	46.5 (-)	51.0 (+) **	46.9 (+)
Enrolled in at least one semester in each of the first three years	20.9	31.7 (+) ***	22.3 (+)	26.6 (+) ***	22.6 (+)
<b><u>Completions</u></b>					
Completed a credential or enrolled in the third year <sup>h</sup>	38.5	47.8 (+) ***	36.6 (-)	41.1 (+)	35.4 (-)
Completed a credential by the end of the third year	12.5	10.0 (-)	8.6 (-) *	8.1 (-) **	7.2 (-) *
Completed an associate's degree	9.0	8.7 (-)	5.0 (-) ***	5.7 (-) **	4.0 (-) **
Completed a certificate or diploma	3.5	1.2 (-)	3.6 (+)	2.4 (-)	3.2 (-)
Enrolled in at least one semester in the third year	26.0	37.8 (+) ***	28.0 (+)	33.0 (+) ***	28.2 (+)

(continued)

## Table 2.2 (continued)

SOURCE: MDRC calculations using the Achieving the Dream database.

NOTES: Calculations for this table use all available data for sample members in the fall 2002 cohort at Round 1 Achieving the Dream colleges, which includes 66,129 students at 29 colleges. Figures represent average institutional rates. Cases where a particular racial/ethnic group is less than 3 percent of the institution's cohort sample were excluded.

Alamo Community College District is considered one site for the Achieving the Dream initiative, but it has 4 colleges that report data separately to the database. Hence, the number of colleges exceeds 27.

Some colleges did not report into the database on some measures.

Data were not submitted for the fall 2002 cohort at Guilford Technical Community College.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between the control group and other racial/ethnic groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; and \* = 10 percent.

The category "White, Non-Hispanic" is the control group. All other categories are compared with this group.

The direction of the difference in means is shown in parentheses. If a positive impact, a "+" sign is displayed; if a negative impact, a "-" sign is displayed.

<sup>a</sup>The racial/ethnic category "Other" was excluded from the analysis. This group includes those 3,660 students identified as "Multiracial," "Nonresident alien," "Other," or "Unknown."

<sup>b</sup>The pool of colleges for which outcomes were calculated includes only those submitting data on whether students were referred to developmental coursework. Completion rates of developmental coursework were calculated only for students in this group. Grades of C or better must be earned to have completed a course successfully.

<sup>c</sup>The gatekeeper math course is the first college-level math course at the college. The completion rate calculations include students for whom both referral data and grades in gatekeeper courses were available. Refer to Appendix B for more details on the sample used in this calculation. Grades of C or better must be earned to have completed a course successfully.

<sup>d</sup>The gatekeeper English course is the first college-level English course at the college. The completion rate calculations include students for whom both referral data and grades in gatekeeper courses were available. Refer to Appendix B for more details on the sample used in this calculation. Grades of C or better must be earned to have completed a course successfully.

<sup>e</sup>In some cases, credits completed may exceed the value of credits attempted. This phenomenon is a result of students' having earned credits through other means, such as examination.

<sup>f</sup>The initial term of enrollment is fall 2002. The first term after the initial term is spring 2003.

<sup>g</sup>For the fall 2002 cohort, the second year is academic year 2003-2004.

<sup>h</sup>For the fall 2002 cohort, the third year is academic year 2004-2005. A credential is defined as either an associate's degree, a certificate, or a diploma.

It is noteworthy that there were no statistically significant differences between the rates for whites and Native Americans on any of the intermediate measures, including gatekeeper-course completion, course completion, and persistence. At the same time, the average rate at which Native Americans completed credentials — or, more accurately, an associate’s degree — was less than half that for whites, and the difference was statistically significant. For Native American students, factors other than milestone attainment may be at play in their lower rates of completing an associate’s degree. An individual college experiencing a similar gap might conduct focus groups with Native American students to better understand the reasons they are not completing degrees.

Much has been written about low levels of educational attainment among African-American and Latino men.<sup>10</sup> Table 2.3 shows the institutional averages of the Achieving the Dream performance measures for males as analyzed by race and ethnicity. The pattern of differences between black and Hispanic men and white men was essentially the same as that among blacks, Hispanics, and whites generally. Specifically, the average rate for completing gatekeeper math courses was significantly lower for black males than for white males, and there was also a gap in completion of both individual courses and degrees between black and Hispanic men, on one hand, and white men, on the other hand. At the same time, the rates of retention for Hispanic men were higher than those for white men on one of the measures of persistence (enrollment in all three years of the study period). One difference between the findings recorded in Table 2.3 and Table 2.2 is that there is a statistically significant gap in the completion rate for gatekeeper English courses between Native American males and white males, while there is not such a gap for Native Americans and whites generally.

A similar comparison by race and ethnicity for female students is shown in Table 2.4.

As with men, the rates of completing an associate’s degree for black and Hispanic women were significantly lower than for white women. The average rate at which students completed developmental math was actually somewhat higher, on average, for black males than white males, although the difference was not statistically significant. Yet, the average rate for black females was significantly lower than that for white females. These are just the types of important differences that can be revealed by carefully disaggregating data on outcomes by student characteristics. Once differences such as these are exposed, the challenge for colleges is to diagnose their causes in order to develop strategies appropriate for closing the gaps.

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<sup>10</sup>See, for example, Ashburn (2006); Cameron and Heckman (2001).

**Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count**  
**Table 2.3**  
**Average Institutional Rates on Achieving the Dream Performance Indicators at Round 1 Colleges,  
by Race/Ethnicity<sup>a</sup> Among Male Students, Fall 2002 Cohort, Three-Year Outcomes**

		White, Non-Hispanic Males	Asian, Pacific Islander Males	Black, Non-Hispanic Males	Hispanic Males	Native American Males
<b><u>Developmental courses<sup>b</sup></u></b>						
	Successful completion of highest-level developmental math course	24.6	41.8 (+) ***	25.4 (+)	26.5 (+)	24.1 (-)
	Successful completion of highest-level developmental English course	29.4	38.6 (+)	30.5 (+)	35.8 (+)	36.6 (+)
	Successful completion of highest-level developmental reading course	32.4	50.1 (+) **	40.4 (+)	33.8 (+)	30.7 (-)
<b><u>Gatekeeper courses</u></b>						
28	Successful completion of gatekeeper math course <sup>c</sup>	22.9	31.1 (+) *	16.0 (-) **	18.1 (-)	23.1 (+)
	Successful completion of gatekeeper English course <sup>d</sup>	31.3	40.0 (+) *	26.0 (-)	28.9 (-)	22.3 (-) *
<b><u>Course completion</u></b>						
	Ratio of completed credits to attempted credits <sup>e</sup>	70.6	73.8 (+)	64.8 (-) *	61.2 (-) ***	67.8 (-)
<b><u>Persistence</u></b>						
	Enrolled in first the semester after the initial term of enrollment <sup>f</sup>	68.6	74.9 (+) *	65.1 (-)	67.7 (-)	65.8 (-)
	Enrolled in at least one semester in the second year <sup>g</sup>	45.1	62.5 (+) ***	42.5 (-)	48.2 (+)	43.2 (-)
	Enrolled in at least one semester in each of the first three years	19.7	31.3 (+) ***	18.7 (-)	23.3 (+) *	22.7 (+)
<b><u>Completions</u></b>						
	Completed a credential or enrolled in the third year <sup>h</sup>	36.2	47.3 (+) ***	31.0 (-) **	36.9 (+)	33.5 (-)
	Completed a credential by the end of the third year	11.6	9.0 (-)	6.6 (-) **	7.1 (-) **	5.5 (-) **
	Completed an associate's degree	8.6	7.3 (-)	3.3 (-) ***	5.0 (-) **	2.3 (-) ***
	Completed a certificate or diploma	3.0	1.7 (-)	3.3 (+)	2.1 (-)	3.2 (+)
	Enrolled in at least one semester in the third year	24.6	38.3 (+) ***	24.4 (-)	29.8 (+) **	28.0 (+)

(continued)

### Table 2.3 (continued)

SOURCE: MDRC calculations using the Achieving the Dream database.

NOTES: Calculations for this table use all available data for male sample members in the fall 2002 cohort at Round 1 Achieving the Dream colleges, which includes 28,379 students at 29 colleges. Figures represent average institutional rates. Cases where a particular racial/ethnic group is less than 3 percent of the institution's cohort sample were excluded.

Alamo Community College District is considered one site for the Achieving the Dream initiative, but it has 4 colleges that report data separately to the database. Hence, the number of colleges exceeds 27.

Some colleges did not report into the database on some measures.

Data were not submitted for the fall 2002 cohort at Guilford Technical Community College.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between the control group and other racial/ethnic groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; and \* = 10 percent.

The category "White Male" is the control group. All other categories are compared with this group.

The direction of the difference in means is shown in parentheses. If a positive impact, a "+" sign is displayed; if a negative impact, a "-" sign is displayed.

<sup>a</sup>The racial/ethnic category "Other" was excluded from the analysis. This group includes those 3,660 students identified as "Multiracial," "Nonresident alien," "Other," or "Unknown."

<sup>b</sup>The pool of colleges for which outcomes were calculated includes only those submitting data on whether students were referred to developmental coursework. Completion rates of developmental coursework were calculated only for students in this group. Grades of C or better must be earned to have completed a course successfully.

<sup>c</sup>The gatekeeper math course is the first college-level math course at the college. The completion rate calculations include students for whom both referral data and grades in gatekeeper courses were available. Refer to Appendix B for more details on the sample used in this calculation. Grades of C or better must be earned to have completed a course successfully.

<sup>d</sup>The gatekeeper English course is the first college-level English course at the college. The completion rate calculations include students for whom both referral data and grades in gatekeeper courses were available. Refer to Appendix B for more details on the sample used in this calculation. Grades of C or better must be earned to have completed a course successfully.

<sup>e</sup>In some cases, credits completed may exceed the value of credits attempted. This phenomenon is a result of students' having earned credits through other means, such as examination.

<sup>f</sup>The initial term of enrollment is fall 2002. The first term after the initial term is spring 2003.

<sup>g</sup>For the fall 2002 cohort, the second year is academic year 2003-2004.

<sup>h</sup>For the fall 2002 cohort, the third year is academic year 2004-2005. A credential is defined as either an associate's degree, a certificate, or a diploma.

**Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count**

**Table 2.4**

**Average Institutional Rates on Achieving the Dream Performance Indicators at Round 1 Colleges,  
by Race/Ethnicity<sup>a</sup> Among Female Students, Fall 2002 Cohort, Three-Year Outcomes**

	White, Non-Hispanic Females	Asian, Pacific Islander Females	Black, Non-Hispanic Females	Hispanic Females	Native American Females
<b><u>Developmental courses<sup>b</sup></u></b>					
Successful completion of highest-level developmental math course	32.1	36.7 (+)	22.7 (-) *	32.5 (+)	35.4 (+)
Successful completion of highest-level developmental English course	38.5	37.5 (-)	37.6 (-)	38.8 (+)	49.4 (+)
Successful completion of highest-level developmental reading course	41.8	37.5 (-)	36.8 (-)	45.0 (+)	29.0 (-)
<b><u>Gatekeeper courses</u></b>					
Successful completion of gatekeeper math course <sup>c</sup>	22.2	37.6 (+) ***	16.1 (-) *	20.2 (-)	22.3 (+)
Successful completion of gatekeeper English course <sup>d</sup>	29.0	31.0 (+)	27.5 (-)	34.3 (+) *	29.2 (+)
<b><u>Course completion</u></b>					
Ratio of completed credits to attempted credits <sup>e</sup>	76.4	79.4 (+)	67.3 (-) ***	68.3 (-) ***	70.4 (-)
<b><u>Persistence</u></b>					
Enrolled in first the semester after the initial term of enrollment <sup>f</sup>	72.0	68.6 (-)	69.8 (-)	72.6 (+)	74.3 (+)
Enrolled in at least one semester in the second year <sup>g</sup>	48.2	60.6 (+) ***	46.6 (-)	53.0 (+) **	48.4 (+)
Enrolled in at least one semester in each of the first three years	22.3	29.1 (+) **	22.3 (-)	29.0 (+) ***	21.0 (-)
<b><u>Completions</u></b>					
Completed a credential or enrolled in the third year <sup>h</sup>	41.1	47.9 (+) *	37.0 (-) *	43.8 (+)	33.2 (-) **
Completed a credential by the end of the third year	13.5	10.2 (-)	8.8 (-) **	8.5 (-) **	7.1 (-) *
Completed an associate's degree	9.6	9.4 (-)	5.2 (-) ***	6.0 (-) **	4.8 (-) **
Completed a certificate or diploma	3.8	0.8 (-) *	3.6 (-)	2.5 (-)	2.3 (-)
Enrolled in at least one semester in the third year	27.7	37.7 (+) ***	28.2 (+)	35.3 (+) ***	26.2 (-)

(continued)

**Table 2.4. (continued)**

SOURCE: MDRC calculations using the Achieving the Dream database.

NOTES: Calculations for this table use all available data for female sample members in the fall 2002 cohort at Round 1 Achieving the Dream colleges, which includes 37,696 students at 29 colleges. Figures represent average institutional rates. Cases where a particular racial/ethnic group is less than 3 percent of the institution's cohort sample were excluded.

Alamo Community College District is considered one site for the Achieving the Dream initiative, but it has 4 colleges that report data separately to the database. Hence, the number of colleges exceeds 27.

Some colleges did not report into the database on some measures.

Data were not submitted for the fall 2002 cohort at Guilford Technical Community College.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between the control group and other racial/ethnic groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; and \* = 10 percent.

The category "White Females" is the control group. All other categories are compared with this group.

The direction of the difference in means is shown in parentheses. If a positive impact, a "+" sign is displayed; if a negative impact, a "-" sign is displayed.

<sup>a</sup>The racial/ethnic category "Other" was excluded from the analysis. This group includes those 3,660 students identified as "Multiracial," "Nonresident alien," "Other," or "Unknown."

<sup>b</sup>The pool of colleges for which outcomes were calculated includes only those submitting data on whether students were referred to developmental coursework. Completion rates of developmental coursework were calculated only for students in this group. Grades of C or better must be earned to have completed a course successfully.

<sup>c</sup>The gatekeeper math course is the first college-level math course at the college. The completion rate calculations include students for whom both referral data and grades in gatekeeper courses were available. Refer to Appendix B for more details on the sample used in this calculation. Grades of C or better must be earned to have completed a course successfully.

<sup>d</sup>The gatekeeper English course is the first college-level English course at the college. The completion rate calculations include students for whom both referral data and grades in gatekeeper courses were available. Refer to Appendix B for more details on the sample used in this calculation. Grades of C or better must be earned to have completed a course successfully.

<sup>e</sup>In some cases, credits completed may exceed the value of credits attempted. This phenomenon is a result of students' having earned credits through other means, such as examination.

<sup>f</sup>The initial term of enrollment is fall 2002. The first term after the initial term is spring 2003.

<sup>g</sup>For the fall 2002 cohort, the second year is academic year 2003-2004.

<sup>h</sup>For the fall 2002 cohort, the third year is academic year 2004-2005. A credential is defined as either an associate's degree, a certificate, or a diploma.

### **Gaps in Institutional Rates Analyzed by Whether or Not Students Received a Pell Grant**

Several studies have shown that students from low-income families not only enroll in college at lower rates than do students from high-income families but are also less likely to earn a credential.<sup>11</sup> Because colleges do not collect information on the incomes of all students, however, Achieving the Dream is using the percentage of students who receive Pell Grants as a proxy measure for the proportion of students who are low-income. While this was the best proxy available, studies have shown that the ratio of students who receive Pell Grants to those who do not receive them may not be a reliable indicator of the economic diversity of a college's student body.<sup>12</sup> For a variety of reasons, not all students who are eligible for Pell Grants apply for or receive them.

Table 2.5 shows the average institutional rates on the Achieving the Dream performance measures for students who received Pell Grants compared with those who did not. On most of the measures, the rates for Pell Grant recipients were higher (and significantly so) than those for students who did not receive Pell Grants. These findings do not necessarily mean that receiving a Pell Grant increases a student's chances of success, although some studies have found that financial aid has a positive effect on student attainment.<sup>13</sup> Notably, although rates of persistence or retention were significantly higher for Pell students than for non-Pell students on all three measures examined in the study, the rates of credential completion were not significantly different. So, whatever advantage Pell recipients have over nonrecipients on intermediate measures of progress, this does not seem to carry over to success in completing credentials, at least for students in the Round 1 colleges over the three-year period examined here.

### **Gaps in Institutional Rates Analyzed by Whether or Not Students Were Referred to Developmental Instruction**

The average rate at which students in the cohort examined here were referred to developmental math was nearly 80 percent across the Round 1 institutions (not shown in tables). The average developmental referral rates for English and reading were 45 percent and 47 percent respectively. Nearly half of all students were referred to more than one developmental course, on average.

Table 2.6 shows the institutional averages of the Achieving the Dream performance measures for students referred to developmental instruction compared with those who were considered ready for college-level work. Not surprisingly, the success rates for students who

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<sup>11</sup>See, for example, Carbrera, Burkum, and La Nasa (2005).

<sup>12</sup>Tebbs and Turner (2005).

<sup>13</sup>See, for example, Dynarski (2003).

## Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count

**Table 2.5**

### **Average Institutional Rates on Achieving the Dream Colleges Performance Indicators at Round 1 Colleges, by Pell Grant Receipt Status,<sup>a</sup> Fall 2002 Cohort, Three-Year Outcomes**

	Pell Grant Recipient	Pell Grant Nonrecipient	Pell Grant Difference
<b><u>Developmental courses<sup>b</sup></u></b>			
Successful completion of highest-level developmental math course	32.9	24.7	8.2 **
Successful completion of highest-level developmental English course	41.7	30.3	11.5 **
Successful completion of highest-level developmental reading course	42.1	30.3	11.8 **
<b><u>Gatekeeper courses</u></b>			
Successful completion of gatekeeper math course <sup>c</sup>	22.7	19.2	3.5
Successful completion of gatekeeper English course <sup>d</sup>	35.2	25.4	9.9 ***
<b><u>Course completion</u></b>			
Ratio of completed credits to attempted credits <sup>e</sup>	68.0	70.4	-2.3
<b><u>Persistence</u></b>			
Enrolled in first the semester after the initial term of enrollment <sup>f</sup>	81.3	61.8	19.5 ***
Enrolled in at least one semester in the second year <sup>g</sup>	57.0	41.5	15.5 ***
Enrolled in at least one semester in each of the first three years	29.1	18.7	10.4 ***
<b><u>Completions</u></b>			
Completed a credential or enrolled in the third year <sup>h</sup>	46.1	34.0	12.1 ***
Completed a credential by the end of the third year	11.3	9.9	1.4
Completed an associate's degree	7.8	6.7	1.1
Completed a certificate or diploma	3.4	3.2	0.3
Enrolled in at least one semester in the third year	34.9	24.1	10.8 ***

SOURCE: MDRC calculations using the Achieving the Dream database.

(continued)

NOTES: Calculations for this table use all available data for sample members in the fall 2002 cohort at Round 1 Achieving the Dream colleges, which includes 66,129 students at 29 colleges. Figures represent average institutional rates.

Alamo Community College District is considered one site for the Achieving the Dream initiative, but it has 4 colleges that report data separately to the database. Hence, the number of colleges exceeds 27.

Some colleges did not report into the database on some measures.

Data were not submitted for the fall 2002 cohort at Guilford Technical Community College.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between the research groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; and \* = 10 percent.

<sup>a</sup>Pell Grant status was determined by receipt in any term in the three years.

<sup>b</sup>The pool of colleges for which outcomes were calculated includes only those submitting data on whether students were referred to developmental coursework. Completion rates of developmental coursework were calculated only for students in this group. Grades of C or better must be earned to have completed a course successfully.

**Table 2.5 (continued)**

<sup>c</sup>The gatekeeper math course is the first college-level math course at the college. The completion rate calculations include students for whom both referral data and grades in gatekeeper courses were available. Refer to Appendix B for more details on the sample used in this calculation. Grades of C or better must be earned to have completed a course successfully.

<sup>d</sup>The gatekeeper English course is the first college-level English course at the college. The completion rate calculations include students for whom both referral data and grades in gatekeeper courses were available. Refer to Appendix B for more details on the sample used in this calculation. Grades of C or better must be earned to have completed a course successfully.

<sup>e</sup>In some cases, credits completed may exceed the value of credits attempted. This phenomenon is a result of students' having earned credits through other means, such as examination.

<sup>f</sup>The initial term of enrollment is fall 2002. The first term after the initial term is spring 2003.

<sup>g</sup>For the fall 2002 cohort, the second year is academic year 2003-2004.

<sup>h</sup>For the fall 2002 cohort, the third year is academic year 2004-2005. A credential is defined as either an associate's degree, a certificate, or a diploma.

were referred to remediation were lower on several key measures of success than for those who were not referred. For example, the average rate at which students who were referred to developmental mathematics went on to complete gatekeeper math in under three years was 20 percentage points lower than the rate for students who were not referred. The main exception was on measures of persistence. For instance, the average rate at which students enrolled in at least one semester in the third year was 33 percent for those referred to remediation, and it was 28 percent for those who were not referred — and this difference is statistically significant. It may be that, given more time, the gap in credential completion between referred and not-referred students could narrow.

## **Planned Approach to Measuring Progress**

The colleges participating in Achieving the Dream hope to improve performance rates and narrow gaps among student groups on all five of the main indicators as a result of the policies and practices implemented through the initiative. As the initiative progresses, the evaluation team will compare the average rates for the student cohorts who enrolled in the Round 1 colleges before the start of the implementation phase of the initiative with those for cohorts who enrolled afterward. This will make it possible to identify which colleges were able to improve their performance or narrow achievement gaps on particular measures during the initiative.

However, because this study does not include data from comparable colleges that are *not* participating in Achieving the Dream, even clear patterns of improvement in the performance measures at the participating colleges will not be able to definitively attributed to the initiative. Nevertheless, it is expected that colleges that are successful in implementing strategies that affect students on a substantial scale and in building a “culture of evidence” will show greater improvements during the four-year implementation phase.

## Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count

**Table 2.6**

### **Average Institutional Rates on Achieving the Dream Performance Indicators at Round 1 Colleges, by Developmental Instruction Referral Status, Fall 2002 Cohort, Three-Year Outcomes**

	Referred	Not Referred	Difference
<b><u>Gatekeeper courses<sup>a</sup></u></b>			
Successfully completed gatekeeper math course <sup>b</sup>	17.2	37.4	-20.2 ***
Successfully completed gatekeeper English course <sup>c</sup>	29.8	32.2	-2.4
<b><u>Course completion</u></b>			
Ratio of completed credits to attempted credits <sup>d</sup>	64.3	75.3	-11.0 ***
<b><u>Persistence</u></b>			
Enrolled in the first semester after the initial term of enrollment <sup>e</sup>	73.6	71.9	1.7
Enrolled in at least one semester in the second year <sup>f</sup>	52.5	50.1	2.4
Enrolled in at least one semester in each of the first three years	27.1	21.7	5.4 **
<b><u>Completions</u></b>			
Completed a credential or enrolled in the third year <sup>g</sup>	40.3	42.8	-2.5
Completed a credential by end of the third year	7.3	15.0	-7.7 ***
Completed an associate's degree	5.1	12.8	-7.6 ***
Completed a certificate or diploma	2.2	2.2	-0.1
Enrolled in at least one semester in the third year	33.0	27.8	5.2 **

SOURCE: MDRC calculations using the Achieving the Dream database.

NOTES: Calculations for this table use all available data for sample members in the fall 2002 cohort at Round 1 Achieving the Dream colleges, which includes 66,129 students at 29 colleges. Of these 29 colleges, at most 23 submitted any developmental instruction referral data. Figures represent average institutional rates.

Alamo Community College District is considered one site for the Achieving the Dream initiative, but it has 4 colleges that report data separately to the database. Hence, the number of colleges exceeds 27.

Some colleges did not report into the database on some measures.

Data were not submitted for the fall 2002 cohort at Guilford Technical Community College.

A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between the research groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; and \* = 10 percent.

<sup>a</sup>Grades of C or better must be earned to have completed a course successfully.

<sup>b</sup>The gatekeeper math course is the first college-level math course at the college. The completion rate calculations include students for whom both referral data and grades in gatekeeper courses were available. Refer to Appendix B for more details on the sample used in this calculation.

<sup>c</sup>The gatekeeper English course is the first college-level English course at the college. The completion rate calculations include students for whom both referral data and grades in gatekeeper courses were available. Refer to Appendix B for more details on the sample used in this calculation.

<sup>d</sup>In some cases, credits completed may exceed the value of credits attempted. This phenomenon is a result of students' having earned credits through other means, such as examination.

<sup>e</sup>The initial term of enrollment is fall 2002. The first term after the initial term is spring 2003.

<sup>f</sup>For the fall 2002 cohort, the second year is academic year 2003-2004.

<sup>g</sup>For the fall 2002 cohort, the third year is academic year 2004-2005. A credential is defined as either an associate's degree, a certificate, or a diploma.



## Chapter 3

# Building a Culture of Evidence

### Conceptual Framework: What Is a Culture of Evidence?

Central to the Achieving the Dream approach to improving success for all students is the idea that colleges need to build a “culture of inquiry, evidence, and accountability.” According to the Achieving the Dream “framing paper,” which the initiative’s partners developed to guide the initiative:<sup>1</sup>

Institutions should make decisions and allocate resources based on evidence of what is working and what is not. A data-driven decision-making process is most effective when administrators, faculty and staff across the institution examine evidence and engage in frank discussions about outcomes for different student populations. The college then sets measurable goals for improvement and uses data to assess its progress.

Achieving the Dream encourages colleges to engage faculty, student services staff, and administrators on a wide scale in using data to understand where their students are experiencing problems, to design strategies for remedying those problems, to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies, and to make further changes based on the evaluation findings. Participating colleges received one-year planning grants to enable them to begin this process. Colleges are expected to continue data analysis during the four-year implementation phase and to institutionalize the process as the basis for continuing program review, strategic planning, and resource allocation.

Community colleges, as with most educational institutions, generally use data and research more to comply with regulations and funding requirements than to improve student outcomes.<sup>2</sup> Colleges spend a great deal of time meeting the reporting requirements of federal, state, and local government agencies as well as of private funders. For example, colleges are required annually to submit extensive information on their students, faculty, finances, and other aspects of their operation to the U.S. Department of Education as part of the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, or IPEDS. Yet, because the data it provides are generally institutional-level aggregates, IPEDS is generally not very useful to colleges in helping them decide how to improve the quality and impact of their programs and services.

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<sup>1</sup>MDC, Inc. (2006a), p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>Morest and Jenkins (2007).

For most colleges in the initiative, therefore, the scope of the data analysis process required by Achieving the Dream is a new challenge. It usually involves an expanded role for institutional research (IR) staff and increased demands on colleges' information systems, which are typically designed to support enrollment, scheduling, and other operational activities, rather than research. While some community colleges have well-staffed research offices and robust, user-friendly information systems, most do not.<sup>3</sup> As Chapter 1 explains, each college participating in Achieving the Dream has been assigned a data facilitator who, along with a coach, is responsible for helping the college build and institutionalize a culture of evidence.

This chapter examines the efforts of the 27 Round 1 Achieving the Dream colleges to build a culture of evidence during the planning year and the first year of the four-year implementation phase. The evaluation team's visits to these colleges in spring 2006 yielded several notable findings. Achieving the Dream has clearly raised awareness of the importance of using data on students in decision-making. Besides the focus on helping underserved students succeed, the "culture of evidence" concept seems to be the hallmark of Achieving the Dream, even among those not directly involved in the initiative. At several colleges, the evaluators found that when confronted with hard data about the poor outcomes of their students, faculty and staff were motivated to work to address the problems.

Transforming organizational cultures and practices to support data-based decision-making is clearly not easy, however. While most of the colleges attempted to follow at least the general outlines of the data analysis process advocated by Achieving the Dream, fewer than half involved a substantial segment of the faculty in analyzing data during the planning phase. At the other colleges, data analysis and decisions about strategies were confined to smaller groups, which did generally include faculty members, however. A little more than a third of the colleges used analysis of their own data to select strategies for the implementation phase. However, only a handful formulated their strategies based on a systematic diagnosis of the problems and an examination of previous attempts by the college to address them.

The most common obstacle to building a culture of evidence is the difficulty many colleges have retrieving and analyzing data. For some colleges, the source of the problem seems to have been primarily with their information technology systems or staffing. In other cases, colleges reported having too few IR staff, particularly for the heightened level of research required to support broad-based use of data. It is also clear that many colleges could use guidance on designing and conducting evaluations.

Faculty and staff at many of the colleges expressed concern that data would be used against them; others were skeptical that increased use of data and research would lead to im-

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<sup>3</sup>Morest and Jenkins (2007).

proved student outcomes. Even colleges that have been successful in getting buy-in for increased data-based decision-making still confront the challenge that most faculty and staff are not accustomed to using data in the way that Achieving the Dream advocates. The lack of familiarity with using data to analyze and devise improvements on student outcomes often extends to the most basic level, such as what questions to ask.

These findings suggest that expanding data-based decision-making in colleges requires not only investing adequate resources in IR staff and addressing technical barriers to data access but also increasing the legitimacy of IR in the eyes of faculty and staff and educating faculty and staff about how to use data to improve teaching and student supports. Ultimately, it requires a change in culture to one of shared responsibility for student success, a readiness to accept both positive and negative evidence of student success, and the will to act on the evidence.

This chapter describes the range of institutional research capacity and data use among the colleges at the start of the initiative. It then examines the colleges' initial steps to build a culture of evidence, assessing the effect these efforts have had on the use of data for improving student outcomes at the colleges thus far, while identifying obstacles to further development. The final section assesses the extent to which the colleges have continued the Achieving the Dream data analysis process beyond the initial planning year.

## **The Status Quo: IR Capacity and Use of Data for Improvement at the Outset**

This section assesses the scope of institutional research — or “IR” — activities and the use of data in decision-making at the Round 1 colleges before they became involved with the initiative.

### **IR Capacity**

Although two or three of the smaller colleges had no full-time IR staff when they joined Achieving the Dream, the majority of the colleges had at least one full-time IR staff person. About a quarter of the colleges had well-staffed departments, which in some cases carried out functions with such titles as “institutional effectiveness” and “business intelligence” that transcend conventional institutional research. However, at most of the colleges, resources for institutional research were limited, and, in more than a third, the IR staff were working hard just to fulfill the basic requirements for state and federal reporting.

### **Use of Data for Improvement**

At the outset of the initiative, only a handful of the colleges were using data systematically to manage programs and services, and, even in those cases, “management by evidence”

was still in a fairly early stage of development. Most colleges reported that they operated mainly on experience and intuition. This included some colleges with well-developed IR departments. A vice president of student services at one such college said that, before Achieving the Dream, “we had the staff to collect data, and if you told them what you wanted they could go out and get it for you, but we didn’t have the analysis part of it, which is what Achieving the Dream is really helping us with.” An instructional dean at the same college said that, in the past, the main functions of the IR office were to do the analysis needed for reaccreditation and for state and federal reporting. This was the case at most of the Round 1 colleges.

The few colleges that were using data for improvement seemed to have done so at the direction of a president committed to using a data-driven approach to management. At these colleges, institutional research is no longer seen merely as an administrative function but as key to ensuring that the college is performing effectively. Indeed, in some cases, the IR staff are part of a larger “institutional effectiveness” (IE) department or function responsible for systematizing planning and evaluation across the college. In most of these “early adopter” colleges, the director of IR or IE is a member of the college’s executive team. For example, when she arrived at the institution in the late 1990s, the president of one college promoted the director of IE to the executive staff and expanded the IE department. She noted, “We were a believer in [a culture of evidence] before it was ‘cool.’” At the same time, she said that the college’s institutional effectiveness effort had largely been confined to senior administrators, so she saw Achieving the Dream as an opportunity to extend evidence-based decision-making to faculty and staff.

Many if not most of the colleges had individual faculty or staff who collect and analyze data on their own to test the effectiveness of particular programs or practices. Generally, however, there was no mechanism by which findings from these isolated efforts were shared with others. Most of the colleges also lacked a system for disseminating the results of research conducted at the institutional level to faculty and staff. Only one college joined Achieving the Dream with a well-developed system for “institutional learning” that involved faculty and staff on a substantial scale in analyzing data on students and using the results to inform program improvements.

## **The Achieving the Dream Planning Process: First Steps Toward Building a Culture of Evidence**

The participating colleges received one-year, \$50,000 planning grants to identify a set of priority problems with student achievement and to formulate strategies for addressing them over the following four-year implementation phase. Colleges were expected to track cohorts of students longitudinally to identify “leakage points,” where students struggle or drop out, as well as gaps in achievement among different student groups. In addition, colleges were encouraged to involve faculty and staff on a wide scale in examining the data and helping to formulate the strategies for improving student success. This section describes how the colleges approached

this process, what challenges they encountered, and what seem to be some of the more exemplary approaches.

### **Data Teams**

For the planning phase, colleges were asked to create a data team to orchestrate the collection and analysis of data; this team was separate from the core team (which, as Chapter 1 describes, was tasked with managing the overall initiative at each college). Most of the colleges did form a separate data team, at least initially. In most cases, the IR director (if there was one) headed the data team, and the teams included faculty members and others who were not researchers.

As they moved more deeply into the work, several colleges merged their core and data teams. According to one college that created a single “steering committee,” the rationale for doing so was that: “The communication across the two teams didn’t make much sense. They were doing similar things. And we needed implementers [to be involved in analyzing data]. We thought we should bring the folks to the table who could ask questions of the data.” Notably, in this case, the IR office was responsible for coordinating the overall initiative at the college, not just the data piece. According to the evaluators who visited the college, the strong presence of IR on the steering committee explains the methodical way in which the college has approached its work on Achieving the Dream.

At another college, the data team coordinates efforts among other teams responsible for research and assessment and the college’s IR department, recently renamed the “department of institutional research and learning assessment.” These other teams include “conditions of learning,” “learning outcomes,” and “student success.” Another group, the “formative indicators team,” or “FIT,” focuses more on qualitative assessment and involves faculty members in generating the questions for research on the various learning interventions the college is implementing. The FIT was formed under Achieving the Dream at the advice of the data facilitator, who felt that the college needed to strengthen its qualitative research to match its quantitative capabilities.

Several of the colleges have incorporated the data team function into existing councils or committees. One college gave responsibility for identifying gaps in student achievement to its existing “planning and development council” (PDC). The college also created three separate task forces, which include faculty, staff, and administrators, under the PDC: “comprehensive student advising,” “assessment, placement, and matriculation,” and “shared accountability for student learning.” The job of each of these task forces is to produce recommendations for the PDC and the college to implement. After successful implementation, the task forces will receive a new charge and come up with new recommendations. Another college redesigned its existing committee structure to reflect the Achieving the Dream goals, creating three new committees responsible for

college oversight: “student success,” “learning evidence,” and “institutional effectiveness.” At a few colleges, the data team has disbanded or has been absorbed by the IR office.

### **Identifying Priority Problems**

About half the colleges have used longitudinal data on student cohorts to identify the priority problems. The majority have used student focus groups to identify barriers to student success and to probe for possible causes. Several used data from the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), a national survey that schools volunteer to participate in.

There was disagreement about the usefulness of the Achieving the Dream database, which, as described in Chapter 2, contains data reported by the participating colleges on the demographic, transcript, and award information for individuals in fall cohorts of first-time, credential-seeking students at each college. Some of the colleges were already doing longitudinal tracking or were readily able to do it with their own data systems — for example, the four Florida colleges, which have benefited from the longitudinal tracking studies that the research staff at the Florida Department of Education’s Division of Community Colleges and Workforce Development regularly conduct.

A few colleges viewed having to compile the data for Achieving the Dream as an unnecessary burden. The IR director at one college stated that the student transcript data were being gathered for some “man behind the curtain” rather than for the college’s benefit. The director of planning, budget, and institutional research at a college with a sophisticated institutional research capacity noted:

The data itself [is] pretty basic. I don’t know where we would use it. It’s like the lowest common denominator that every school can use. . . . The biggest thing is that the data we get back doesn’t have other schools. We only get data back about us and not other schools. So what is the point of that?

Still, a handful of the colleges, particularly small colleges with limited resources for IR, did find the Achieving the Dream data useful in examining student retention. At least two small colleges were considering using the data they have collected for Achieving the Dream as the basis for a “data warehouse,” a way of organizing data on students that facilitates longitudinal tracking. However, one IR director said that the Achieving the Dream database does not include data on important groups of students — such as returning students, those not seeking a degree, and noncredit students — and so could not be used to answer many of the research questions her office receives. This complaint was echoed by other colleges. Several colleges said that the database will be more useful once they are able to do comparative analysis using the “data cubes” and “Data Beacon,” new on-line analysis tools that are not yet available.

Even those who did *not* find the Achieving the Dream data useful agreed that longitudinal tracking of student cohorts is a powerful method for identifying gaps in student achievement. Some colleges had not considered doing this sort of analysis before, and the Achieving the Dream database helped to enlighten them about its benefits.

### **Engaging Faculty, Administrators, Staff, and Students in Data Analysis**

The extent to which colleges involved faculty, administrators, and staff in analyzing data during the planning phase also varied. Some colleges included faculty and staff on the data teams. In other cases, colleges formed somewhat larger groups comprising faculty, staff, and administrators. In at least one case, however, the larger groups consisted of faculty but not student services staff. With some exceptions, faculty members were better represented in the data analysis groups than were student services staff.

Several colleges presented findings from their initial analyses at fall convocations or other large meetings to raise awareness across the institution about deficits in student attainment and about Achieving the Dream and other efforts to address such problems. At least one college used an all-college retreat to formulate the college's strategies. However, the president of that college was very candid in saying that he wished the administration had done more to facilitate faculty buy-in during the planning year. "We should have worked more aggressively at getting a broader ownership of Achieving the Dream in the life of the institution," he said. "I think we made some efforts, but one of the criticisms that we've heard [from the faculty] when we got to the implementation of the first year was: 'These aren't our plans; they're your plans.'"

Fewer than half the colleges involved a substantial segment of the faculty in analyzing data during the planning phase. At the other colleges, data analysis and decisions about strategies were confined to smaller groups, which did typically include faculty members. At one college where the decision-making group consisted mainly of administrators, both math and English faculty did not seem to be aware that a planning process had taken place. Math faculty who were on the data team complained about not seeing the data before the results were presented. English faculty complained about not knowing how data were collected and decisions were made, and they pointed out that there were errors in the presentation of the data. At another college, the director of grants and special projects, in consultation with the college's president and cabinet (but not the faculty), decided to focus one of the Achieving the Dream priorities on developmental math.

As mentioned above, many colleges used focus groups or surveys as a means of getting students' perspectives on barriers to success and opportunities for improvement. However, the evaluation team found no colleges that involved students actively in analyzing data and formulating strategies.

## **Formulating and Evaluating Strategies**

A little more than a third of the colleges used analysis of their own data to select strategies for the implementation phase. Only a handful formulated their strategies based on a systematic diagnosis of the problems and an examination of previous attempts by the college to address them. Not surprisingly then, some interviewees had a hard time drawing any connections between the data analysis their colleges performed and the intervention strategies they chose.

A few colleges relied on the research and “best practices” literatures to guide their selection of strategies. For example, a small college with limited IR capacity acknowledged that it decided to implement learning communities based on evaluations conducted elsewhere. The evaluators who visited this college suggested that the college seems to be moving toward being “research-driven” rather than “data-driven,” in that, while the college lacks capacity to chose strategies based on an analysis of its own data, it has begun to look to outside research to guide the choice of strategies. Other colleges seem to have a similarly broad interpretation of a “culture of evidence.”

Over half the colleges had a clear idea of the strategies they wanted to implement before the initiative began, and they used the Achieving the Dream data analysis to justify their choices. In fairness, some of these had already done data analysis prior to Achieving the Dream that informed their choice of strategies. Nevertheless, relatively few of those interviewed by the evaluation team echoed the view expressed by a faculty member at one college, who said:

If we keep doing what we’re doing now, nothing is going to change. So we will have to make some changes. This way we get to try some things. If they work, we’re going to keep them. If not, we’ll move on to something else.

Chapter 5 examines in detail how the colleges implemented strategies for improving student success. However, only about a quarter of the colleges have developed a formal plan for evaluating the effectiveness of their strategies, although some of the others acknowledge the need for such a plan. As will be discussed later in this chapter, some of the plans that colleges have developed to evaluate their strategies raise methodological concerns.

## **Role of the Data Facilitators**

Each college was assigned a data facilitator, a research expert to help the college fulfill the technical requirements of Achieving the Dream — in particular, the longitudinal and sub-group analysis. Nearly all the colleges indicated that the data facilitators were helpful to them. Respondents from several colleges said that the data facilitators helped them to frame the questions they should be asking of the data. Others said that the data facilitators were helpful in reminding them to question the status quo and in encouraging them to seek evidence to substanti-

ate their choice of strategies. The evaluation team also heard from several colleges that the data facilitators and coaches (who offered assistance on managing the overall initiative) helped them to focus and prioritize their activities under the initiative.

Several colleges mentioned that their data facilitator helped them analyze the Achieving the Dream data or data from their own student information systems. Some data facilitators helped the colleges design focus groups for students and community members and, in at least a couple cases, actually conducted some of the focus groups. For example, one president of a rural college said of a data facilitator:

I'm sure it was not part of his job description to physically do focus groups and analyze the results, and he has done that on a number of occasions and it's been a huge help. It's so important for these focus groups to be done by people that aren't part of the institution, and when you live in a rural area, finding people easily who could come and do that — well he's just done a wonderful job. I think he enjoys doing the groups, and it certainly gives him some real insights as he gets the opportunity to interact with students, faculty, and community members. What he's contributed to us has been invaluable.

A handful of colleges expressed different expectations of the data facilitators' role. Two colleges with limited institutional research (IR) capacity wanted more hands-on assistance from their data facilitators. The director of IR at a small institution said that the college wanted its data facilitator to provide training to faculty and staff on how to analyze data. Referring to the assistance the college has received from the data facilitator and the coach, this person said, "We lack so much on our own that we need more guidance than they are providing. They probably feel that we know this stuff, but we don't."

A vice president at one college said that while the coach and data facilitator helped to raise questions, the college needed them to be more prescriptive about the answers. This college hired a consultant to provide "hands-on" technical assistance it had hoped to get from the coach and data facilitator. Similarly, the IR director at another college said that when the coach and data facilitator meet with faculty and staff, they "churn stuff up" but then do not do enough to help resolve the issues raised.

More than one college indicated that its data facilitator was more helpful in the initial planning year than in the implementation phase. Other than these concerns, the feedback on the data facilitators was generally positive.

## **Impact of Achieving the Dream on Use of Data**

Achieving the Dream has clearly raised awareness of the importance of using data about students in institutional decision-making. According to one president: “Our people are beginning to ask, ‘What does the evidence show?’ rather than, ‘What do you think?’ [It is] [t]he culture of evidence . . . rather than the anecdotal stories we’ve used for 30 years.” The vice president for education and student development at another college, who refers to Achieving the Dream simply as “the Dream,” said that: “The Dream project provided for us that avenue to talk about data and what it means to make decisions based on data. It used to be: ‘Who is in charge of that? Is that a campus initiative?’ Now people are saying: ‘What data do you have to support it?’” Similar views were expressed at most if not all of the other colleges. The “culture of evidence” concept clearly resonated with most of those interviewed at the participating colleges. Besides the focus on helping underserved students succeed, this seems to be the hallmark of Achieving the Dream, even for those not directly involved in the initiative.

At least two colleges indicated that the initiative has shown them the value of longitudinal tracking of students. The IR director at one college said that community colleges in Texas used to do cohort tracking of students through the state’s LONESTAR (LONGitudinal Evaluation, Student Tracking And Reporting) system, which was discontinued several years ago. Achieving the Dream has refocused the college on the importance of cohort tracking, according to the IR director. Other colleges pointed out the value of disaggregating their data so they could compare the outcomes of different student groups. According to IR staff members at one college: “We had looked at our data for years, but had not disaggregated it. We were treating students as if they were all the same. So now, we began focusing on those at risk.”

Central to the Achieving the Dream model is the notion of “cognitive dissonance” — the idea that when faculty and staff see from hard data that their students are not doing as well as expected, they will be motivated to work to change how they teach and support students. This phenomenon was observed at several of the colleges. For example, a math instructor at one college said: “The math data were definitely good to see. Our Math 60 courses — [the] basic course — students don’t tend to do as well as we thought. . . . That’s one of the reasons we talked about rearranging courses. This will help.” A developmental English instructor at the same college said: “The data makes the campus community more aware of our [developmental education] students.”

At about half the colleges, faculty and staff expressed concern that data might be used to blame them for students’ lack of success. A fuller discussion of this problem is presented in the next section, but there is some evidence that participating in Achieving the Dream has helped colleges move beyond those fears. More and more faculty and staff are buying into the notion that Achieving the Dream is fundamentally about using data to improve student outcomes, not to punish faculty and staff.

Indeed, administrators at several colleges indicated that Achieving the Dream has helped them persuade faculty and staff of the value of measuring student outcomes. The associate director of institutional effectiveness at one college credits the initiative with helping faculty ask the right questions so that they can better evaluate student outcomes. At another college, faculty said that they were now more aware of how many students are in developmental education, which has strengthened their resolve both to reduce the number of students placed into developmental courses and to help developmental students advance more rapidly into college-level courses. Both developmental and college-level faculty at the college reported seeing more enthusiasm around data collection and analysis.

In several cases, Achieving the Dream has helped to elevate the role of institutional research. At one college, for example, IR staff members said that they are integrally involved in strategic planning for the first time. In at least one case, Achieving the Dream has led to increased sharing of student data with local high schools and universities.

Not surprisingly, Achieving the Dream has increased the demands on institutional research at nearly all the participating colleges. Despite the increased workload, IR staff at some colleges said they were pleased by the fact that their analyses are being used productively. The director of institutional planning and research at one college said: “We’re always under pressure, but it has made what we’re doing much more meaningful that data are being looked at and being looked at with a purpose, not just for the sake of reporting.”

Achieving the Dream colleges were permitted to use some of their grant money to increase their IR capacity; at least half of the 27 colleges have hired additional IR staff. Three others have replaced their IR directors, in at least one case hiring an individual with a broader skill set. A small college hired a research analyst to do more focus groups with students and to ensure that the college’s strategies are properly evaluated. Participation in Achieving the Dream apparently encouraged one large college to expand the focus of its IR department to include assessment of learning.

Several of the colleges, including the one just mentioned, have purchased software to facilitate access and analysis of data on students, including software to better enable them to analyze longitudinal data from “data warehouses” and create “dashboards” of performance indicators for administrators and others.<sup>4</sup> Customizing these systems to a college’s particular needs and training staff to use them effectively take time. One college had been trying to install

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<sup>4</sup>A “data warehouse” is a database that incorporates data from different functional areas and time periods. Several of the Achieving the Dream colleges have established data warehouses to facilitate analysis of longitudinal cohort data on students. “Dashboards” are software that provides timely information on an organization’s performance according to a limited set of indicators. They are typically used by senior administrators to gauge an institution’s progress on key indicators, such as enrollment, retention rates, and faculty diversity.

a front-end software system for over a year and did not expect to have a functional system in place until June 2007. Even after that point, the college expected continually to add to the basic functionalities of the system.

## **Challenges and Obstacles to Building a Culture of Evidence**

### **Retrieving and Analyzing Data**

The most common obstacle to building a culture of evidence is the difficulty many colleges have retrieving and analyzing data. At least six colleges had trouble even compiling the data for the Achieving the Dream database. Two others were recently cited by their accrediting agency (the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, or SACS) as lacking the data analysis systems and procedures needed to adequately review and improve college programs and services.

For some colleges, the problem lies primarily with their information technology (IT) systems and staffing. Achieving the Dream has emphasized the importance of building strong institutional research functions, but it has paid far less attention to the critical role of IT. Yet, some of the colleges have antiquated or barely operational information systems. Sixteen of the 27 colleges have either transitioned to a new IT platform since they joined Achieving the Dream or had recently done so. The Virginia Community College System recently completed a move to an integrated statewide system, and the North Carolina system is in the process of a similar transition. In the long run, these efforts should improve colleges' capacity to access and analyze data and will certainly strengthen the capacity for research at the state level. In the near term, however, such transitions tend to be highly disruptive, absorbing the time and energy of many staff persons, not just those in IT. Once a new system is in place, the staff must learn how to use it; in many cases, even routine reports need to be developed anew. All this takes time, which makes it difficult for colleges implementing new IT systems to respond to the increased appetite for data from Achieving the Dream and other data-intensive projects.

One college hired a new IT director who is spearheading an effort under Achieving the Dream to develop a “strategic knowledge management system,” or SKMS. The full implementation of the SKMS should facilitate student tracking and diagnostic advising. However, full implementation is not expected for three years, and even partial implementation is likely to be a year or more away. In the meantime, the college has tried to enter by hand data from a pilot test of “individual learning plans” (ILPs) — educational plans that students develop, usually with assistance from an adviser — but this process proved too slow to provide timely information to advisers and faculty, so the college will have to wait until the SKMS is up and running to fully implement the ILP strategy.

IT staffing is a challenge even among colleges with established IT departments. Nearly half the colleges reported having insufficient IT staff, particularly programmers, to respond even to routine requests for data. Turnover among programmers is high at some colleges. Several colleges reported problems with communication between IT and institutional research departments. Sometimes these problems arose when the institutional research staff had to rely on an overburdened IT staff for access to data.

At least two of the large districts are not readily able to compare data across their own colleges. One of these has established a districtwide committee that is working on common data definitions to facilitate cross-campus comparisons. Creating common data definitions and standardizing the use of data across a college are a social problem, not a technical one, that requires broad engagement of users of data to ensure that the information system meets their needs.

More than a third of the colleges expressed concern about the integrity of the data they are collecting. One college, for example, admitted that it had been reporting inaccurate data to IPEDS for years. Recognizing that data problems can seriously compromise the results of data analyses — “garbage in, garbage out” — some colleges have instituted procedures for ensuring that the data available for analysis are “clean.” Achieving the Dream might consider sponsoring forums on-line or at a strategy institute where colleges that have proven methods for cleaning data can share them with others.

### **Institutional Research Capacity**

Of course, insufficient IT capacity is not the only barrier to retrieving and analyzing data. The institutional research (IR) staff at most of the colleges seemed to be stretched thin even by the routine analysis and reporting required for state and federal compliance. More than a third of the colleges reported having too few IR staff, particularly for the heightened level of research required to support broad-based use of data for decision-making. For example, the IR director at a medium-size college described a common situation:

Half of my time is spent on Achieving the Dream-related things. I love this initiative and what it is trying to do, or I would not still be here. But we also have state, federal, SACS [Southern Association of Colleges and Schools], routine data things, internal management systems, plus new initiatives — opening up a small, understaffed department to having data requests from the whole college. We have a technology system that we cannot do anything new with because we are on the verge of changing to a new system. The transition has been postponed for a year due to statewide implementation problems. . . . Our IT department is constantly strapped to keep things rolling. We are just really struggling. I feel like I am drowning. There is hope at

some point, struggling as much as we are, we are doing some good things. We are looking at data on more things and using data as a part of planning conversations . . . but we do not have the capacity to keep up with all the new requests for data. We are desperate for technology solutions. We have too many requests to handle manually.

The situation of the IR director at a small college provides another example. He is quite sophisticated at data analysis, but he is a one-person shop. According to the evaluation team, he was showing signs of burnout. He planned over the summer to offer a course in statistical data analysis to faculty members in hopes that they will be able do more analysis on their own.

### **Need for Guidance on Evaluation Design**

Only about one-fourth of the colleges had formal plans for evaluating the effectiveness of the strategies they are implementing through Achieving the Dream, and some of these plans have methodological problems. Among the common methodological shortcomings are failure to identify a valid comparison group, selection bias, and mistaken inferences about causality. For example, one college allowed students to choose whether they wanted to enter the pilot sections for a new course that offered students supplemental instruction but also required more class time. But the students who volunteered for the pilot sections may have been more highly motivated than those who opted for the shorter classes. In addition, some of the faculty who taught in the pilot sections said that they were using similar methods in their nonpilot classes. Moreover, after the initial pilots, the department chair decided to expand supplemental instruction to *all* developmental math sections. Taken together, these factors make it impossible for the college to define appropriate comparison groups with which to assess the effectiveness of the pilot sections.

Another college's evaluations of a learning communities program and a revamped new student orientation found "dramatic improvement" in student performance and student retention, respectively. However, neither evaluation seems to have taken into account the potential for selection bias. Students participating in the learning communities were likely to be above-average students, as the learning communities targeted students who had a grade of C or better in developmental courses. Similarly, students attending the *nonmandatory* new student orientation were also likely to have been more motivated students.

Evaluating interventions and using those findings to make improvements and to direct resources to strategies proven to be effective are fundamental goals of Achieving the Dream's approach to institutional transformation. It is clear that many of the colleges would benefit from guidance on designing and conducting evaluations.

## Resistance from Faculty and Staff

As mentioned above, faculty and others at a majority of the colleges expressed the concern that data showing poor outcomes for students might be used against them. Referring to his visit to two colleges, a member of the evaluation team wrote: “Some faculty members at both [colleges] . . . expressed concern that the data were being wielded (or could be wielded) as a club to penalize them for things that may be out of their control, such as students’ decisions to stay in or drop out of school. . . .” At another college, faculty feared that the administration might use evidence from the data of poor performance to impose standardized testing.

Indeed, because it brings an emphasis on evaluation that is lacking at most colleges, Achieving the Dream does create the potential for the results to be used punitively. Some interviewees suggested that the way that Achieving the Dream representatives and materials explained the initiative’s focus on addressing problems with student performance collaboratively helped to alleviate fears and facilitated more open and honest dialogue about student outcomes. The vice president of student services at one college said:

What’s good about the initiative is that with other colleges you usually feel you are competing, but, with this initiative, it was, “We are all in this together” and “We all have problems” and issues, and you didn’t feel that you had to be embarrassed or had to hide your issues. They couched it in terms of a national problem, and then we could say, “Yeah, it really is,” and the big picture is there, and individual schools try to do some things to turn it around. No one was being blamed. No particular group has failed, just — “This is what is happening.” And we can discuss how to change that.

Administrators at most of the colleges have sought to assure faculty and staff that data will be used to improve student outcomes, not to punish them. To help communicate this message, Achieving the Dream encouraged colleges to involve faculty in the analysis of data. At one college, for example, several faculty members were unhappy with the focus on quantitative data in analyzing student performance, so the college recruited them to gather qualitative data (including focus groups with students and student essays) to present to the college — thereby converting critics into supporters and creating more buy-in among faculty members because the data were presented by faculty members rather than administrators.

Perhaps related to the fear that data will be used against them, interviewees at some colleges were skeptical that data and research can be used to improve student outcomes. According to the administration at one college, academic faculty in particular argued that learning cannot be measured in a standardized way. The president noted that the occupational faculty are more accustomed to measuring outcomes. Despite the initial resistance, the college’s administration has been successful in getting buy-in from the academic faculty by allowing them to devise

strategies to address gaps in student achievement revealed by the data. Two academic department chairs expressed satisfaction that the administration empowered them, as professionals, to figure out how to address the problems and provided the support needed to implement the solutions. Describing the college's new, more systematic approach to institutional effectiveness, in which each unit of the college sets measurable goals and decides how to achieve them, the chair of the science and agriculture department said:

Before, the college would go through the motions, but there was no buy-in because it wasn't applied, it didn't make sense. . . . [Now the] college is putting faith in [the faculty's] professionalism, so people can sit down and say, "What do we need to do? What do our students need?" We can look at things that are measurable and things we can track. Before it was someone from wherever dictating to me how I should [teach], even if they have no concept of what we are doing. Now I can sit with my colleagues and discuss what we should be looking at. It's not parroting what I was given.

Faculty members at another college indicated that even though they believed that Achieving the Dream was a good fit for the college, they had concerns initially about how the administration was using the data collected for the initiative. Developmental faculty said that they felt they were being blamed for poor student outcomes, and other instructors said that they took issue with how the administration was calculating student retention. One information technology instructor said: "At the [college's Achieving the Dream] retreat, they gave us an overview, and we realized there were some errors as to how they were retrieving the data from our system. Some of the information they were putting on the screen was not accurate." However, several positive developments have subsequently helped to allay these concerns. Faculty seemed particularly enthusiastic about the new professional development workshops for adjunct instructors, the separating out of previously consolidated developmental courses, and improved communication of college policies to students, faculty, and staff. Not surprisingly, then, if faculty see concrete evidence that Achieving the Dream will benefit them and their students, they are much less likely to be suspicious and more likely to embrace it.

Faculty members at one college were enthusiastic about participating in the analysis of data, suggesting that it gives them ammunition to challenge administrators over policies that affect classroom practice and student learning. These faculty members demonstrated that they have a vested interest in analyzing data that are relevant to what goes on in the classroom. For example, one faculty member related how, in an effort to reduce the number of developmental education credit hours, administrators at the college tried to cut required lab time and keep only lectures. The developmental faculty unanimously opposed this, so administrators agreed that faculty could retain the lab and reduce lecture hours in some sections and eliminate labs in others. They agreed to jointly collect data for three years to see which approach was more effective.

tive. The faculty member said that the data show that students who were required to take the labs did better. This vindicated the faculty's position, although the faculty member pointed out that the administration still seems intent on cutting the labs. "We have been trying to figure out why, if the students with the labs did better, they want to eliminate labs," she said, adding that the obvious answer is that "it saves them money."

### **Lack of Experience and Know-How**

Even colleges that have been successful in getting buy-in for increased data-based decision-making still confront the challenge that most faculty and staff are not accustomed to using data in the way that Achieving the Dream promotes. For instance, the institutional research (IR) staff at a large district complained that they are getting too many poorly thought-out requests for information from the task forces a college had set up to devise strategies for addressing priority problems. The IR staff argued that faculty and others need to be trained how to request data from IR, including protocols on what questions to ask, how to interpret data, and how to use information to formulate and evaluate solutions. The IR director at a college with a relatively sophisticated IR department agreed that administrators and faculty need to learn how to ask the right questions, but he argued that it is not his job to teach his colleagues how to do this. He suggested that this would be a useful topic for the Achieving the Dream strategy institutes.

A central focus of Achieving the Dream at another college is to involve faculty and staff on a broad scale in "action research" aimed at evaluating the effectiveness of efforts to improve student success. The college has incorporated training in action research in the institute it has established for faculty seeking tenure. According to an administrator at the college:

We really learned about action research and how to do it through an earlier Title III grant . . . , but we now incorporate action research as part of our Teaching-Learning Academy, which is our tenure induction process. So everyone learns about assessment and inquiry and does an action research project as part of their three-year involvement in that learning community. This year . . . we are moving as many as 50 new faculty a year through that Academy, so if you look at maybe another five years down the line, a good percentage of our full-time faculty would have come through that process.

IR staff at some colleges complained that they do not have a close working relationship with faculty and student services staff. One college appointed a psychology professor to help instructors design and evaluate pilot interventions in their classrooms. The director of student success said: "We put that person in my office because we need someone who is a faculty member and knows what goes on in the classroom and what the requirements are, and can then meet with the faculty and do whatever needs to be done to design the program." The evaluation team

believed that this instructor has the potential to serve as a useful bridge between faculty and the IR department.

Interviewees at several colleges said that they thought IR should play a more proactive role in promoting the *use* of evidence, not just providing access to it. The findings above suggest that expanding the role of institutional research is not only a matter of investing adequate resources in IR staff and addressing technical barriers to data access but also of making the organizational changes needed to increase the legitimacy of IR in the eyes of faculty and staff and of educating faculty and staff about how to use data to improve teaching and student supports. Ultimately, it requires a change in culture to one of shared responsibility for student success and a willingness to accept both positive and negative evidence, and then to act on the evidence. The president of a college that seems to have been fairly successful in building such a culture said that the motto of the college should be: “If the data are making you feel bad, do something about it.”

## **Data Analysis Beyond the Planning Year**

Most of the Round 1 colleges have attempted to follow at least the general outlines of the data analysis process advocated by Achieving the Dream, although they varied in the extent to which they used data to identify problems and to devise strategies to ameliorate them.

The appetite for the colleges to continue using data analysis to make decisions varied after the initial planning year. At the time of the evaluation visits in spring 2006, two of the colleges had only recently begun to follow the Achieving the Dream planning process in earnest during the second year — officially the first year of implementation. Eight of the colleges stopped analyzing data once they had defined their strategies and instead focused on implementation in the second year. A handful of colleges had done only a very limited amount of data analysis and planning, at least at the time of the evaluation visits.

The rest of the colleges were continuing the process of analyzing data that had begun during the planning phase in the first implementation year. About half of these had also started to implement their strategies. The other half continued to analyze data and plan but had not begun full-scale implementation at the time of the evaluation visits. In a couple cases, the delay in implementation was due to turnover among the project or college leadership. In another case, the institution was focused on completing a strategic plan that included a set of goals that clearly reflect Achieving the Dream’s influence, and on promoting standardization of data and procedures and improved communication across the organization. In any case, the college seemed to be on track to begin implementation of strategies in fall 2007. A project director at another college expressed concern that her college was behind the others in implementing strategies. However, she and her colleagues felt that the time invested before implementation to get buy-in from

many different divisions and levels of the organization would help to ensure that the initiative was sustained beyond the life of the grant.

It may not be practical for colleges to continue to follow precisely the process of broad-based engagement and examination of data that Achieving the Dream expected the colleges to undertake during the planning year, particularly given that many colleges set up data teams, committees, and task forces separate from established committees and other organizational structures. The evaluation team will assess how the planning process unfolds in subsequent visits to the colleges. Nevertheless, nearly half the colleges are taking steps to strengthen the use of data in their strategic planning and institutional effectiveness processes. Thus, these colleges are beginning to institutionalize policies and procedures that support a culture of evidence. Their efforts are described in more detail in Chapter 6 of this report.



## Chapter 4

# Leadership and Engagement

### Introduction

The role of each college’s leadership is essential to the Achieving the Dream process of institutional change. The chancellor, president, or chief executive officer of every participating college is expected to make a commitment to the Achieving the Dream goals and values and to lead the implementation of the initiative at his or her institution (for simplicity’s sake, “president” is used to refer to these leaders throughout this report). The Achieving the Dream “framing paper,” which provides the conceptual framework of the initiative, describes an important role for college leaders:<sup>1</sup>

Presidential leadership is essential to bring about institutional change that will improve student outcomes. The president or chancellor must have a vision for student success and equity and must be able to mobilize broad support for that vision throughout the college and community.

But while strong leadership is necessary for institutional change, it is not sufficient. Long-lasting change requires the engagement of individuals beyond the leadership ranks. According to the framing paper, “to tackle an issue as important and complex as improving student success, a college must engage faculty, staff and administrators throughout the institution. It must also seek input from students and the larger community.”<sup>2</sup>

This chapter describes the extent to which the 27 Round 1 colleges have developed broad-based support and participation in Achieving the Dream. The implementation research revealed considerable support — from both college leadership and faculty and staff — for Achieving the Dream goals and values. Many college presidents participated personally on core teams or other initiative steering committees, and several took steps to embed the initiative into their broader college operations, including by involving the Board of Directors in the initiative, restructuring college committees, and integrating the initiative into the strategic planning and budgeting processes of the college. Yet, after delegating oversight responsibility to administrators and other initiative coordinators, most presidents were not involved in the day-to-day implementation of Achieving the Dream activities. This chapter explores how actively engaged in the initiative college presidents need to be, as well as the effect of leadership turnover on

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<sup>1</sup>MDC, Inc. (2006a), p. 11.

<sup>2</sup>MDC, Inc. (2006a), p. 9.

Achieving the Dream implementation. Both of these issues will likely be important avenues for future investigation.

Beyond college presidents, the evaluation team found that administrators, faculty, and staff participating in Achieving the Dream activities come from a variety of academic and student services departments; these participants are working with their colleagues across the traditional college “silos.” When presented with data on the problem faced by their students, they generally reported being surprised and disappointed yet eager to devise strategies to increase student success. But while these individuals were generally enthusiastic supporters of the initiative, they represent only a small subset of college personnel. Relatively few individuals were engaged in Achieving the Dream activities at most colleges, and most college personnel had only a vague understanding of the initiative’s efforts at their institutions. Entrenched attitudes and perspectives on student success presented challenges for colleges as they tried to encourage participation in the initiative. The Achieving the Dream partners assigned coaches (usually former community college presidents) to help the colleges overcome these challenges and to provide guidance at each stage of the institutional change process. And while most colleges appreciated the work of their coaches, much work remains to be done to foster broad-based, sustainable participation in the initiative.

The chapter explores the role of leadership in Achieving the Dream. It includes a discussion of the incentives for college presidents to participate in the initiative and describes the various ways they have been involved. It then examines the extent to which the colleges have been able to engage a broad cross-section of internal and external stakeholders in the initiative and describes some key challenges that current and future Achieving the Dream colleges are likely to face in this effort. The final section discusses how college personnel interacted with Achieving the Dream coaches and how coaches helped the colleges implement and sustain the initiative.

## **Vision and Commitment from College Leadership**

Influenced by the work of Byron McClenney<sup>3</sup> and others on “transformational leadership,”<sup>4</sup> Achieving the Dream calls for strong and committed college leadership, as an important element of institutional change. Leadership support for the initiative sends a signal to the college community that Achieving the Dream is a college priority and, thus, encourages broad-based participation. As one college counselor said:

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<sup>3</sup>Dr. McClenney, former community college president and currently Senior Lecturer in the Department of Educational Administration at the Community College Leadership Program at the University of Texas-Austin, is leading the coaching component of Achieving the Dream.

<sup>4</sup>See Tyree, Milliron, and de los Santos (2004).

I really think that when it comes to Achieving the Dream, because the president and the entire administration are behind it, then people are more responsive than if it is the student services office only or instructional office only. It presents a better picture of the institutional commitment. Also, if the president says it has to be done, you do it.

All Round 1 college presidents interviewed by the evaluation team voiced support for Achieving the Dream goals of improving educational outcomes and eliminating achievement gaps among community college students. The implementation research revealed a few incentives that the leaders had for supporting the initiative, as well as several ways in which they participated in Achieving the Dream activities. Yet, as described in this section, presidents generally delegated oversight of the initiative to other college personnel. While most presidents remained informed of Achieving the Dream activities, they were not regularly engaged in the day-to-day management of the initiative.

### **Incentives for Leadership Participation**

Presidents reported several reasons for their support and participation in Achieving the Dream. Personal affinity for the initiative's goals provided an important incentive to participate. For example, one president's message to the college community has been for all faculty and staff to make decisions based on "what's best for the student" — a vision that was strengthened by his college's involvement with Achieving the Dream. Other presidents saw their own commitment to the "open door" mission of community colleges reflected in the initiative's goal of improving student success, particularly for disadvantaged students. The leader of one college told the evaluation team that Achieving the Dream "is perfectly synchronized with our mission and with my priorities." Furthermore, the initiative's focus on developing a culture of evidence was well aligned with the vision and efforts that several presidents had already introduced at their colleges.

Most of the college leaders interviewed indicated that data-driven decision-making was an important factor in their support for Achieving the Dream. They described a synergy between Achieving the Dream's goal of building a culture of evidence and an increased emphasis on data collection and analysis by state agencies, federal grants, and accreditation bodies. For example, presidents at 14 of the 27 colleges indicated that Achieving the Dream would support their reaccreditation efforts, and 11 presidents said that it was helping their institutions address statewide initiatives and priorities. The president of one Texas college said:

I received the notice about Achieving the Dream by e-mail, and it really could not have come at a better time, because there has been a statewide initiative for closing the achievement gap which is an unfunded mandate. The more I look at the census demographics [of our state], the more concerned I am.

The chance to participate in a high-profile initiative was a third incentive for college leaders to become involved. Several presidents noted the national credibility that it brought to their colleges. The supportive environment at the initiative's national meetings led to honest, "courageous conversations" about institutional performance and encouraged continued participation by the presidents back at their home institutions. The president of one large college said:

We talk about ourselves in a lot of our publications as being an Achieving the Dream college. I've heard our board members talk to their colleagues about how we are an Achieving the Dream college, so they're really proud of it. And they are willing to share this information with other board members at the national level. So it gives them a national forum to what we're doing.

### **Leadership Involvement in Achieving the Dream**

The Achieving the Dream process for institutional change assumes a particularly strong and visible commitment by college leadership. Presidents must be committed to Achieving the Dream, as well as capable of fostering broad-based support for the initiative's goals and values. They are expected to lead the institution's assessment of college readiness for the initiative and recognize both potential stumbling blocks and opportunities for successful implementation and sustainability of the initiative.

#### **Examples of leadership involvement with Achieving the Dream**

Involvement in Achieving the Dream by college presidents took several forms, including participating in or leading the writing of the Achieving the Dream grant proposal; incorporating discussion of the initiative into fall convocations, faculty in-service days and meetings, and other all-college events; leading or participating in Achieving the Dream core teams or steering committees; and participating in the implementation of Achieving the Dream strategies. Many presidents took steps to embed Achieving the Dream activities into their college's operations. The evaluation team found that at least 20 presidents kept their governing boards informed of Achieving the Dream priorities and strategies. Board support is considered an important factor in successful implementation and sustainability; a resolution of board support for the initiative was required from each of the colleges prior to participation. Because governing boards have the authority to implement policies that set the direction of the college, fostering board support and guidance of the initiative will likely improve the chances of sustainability, especially in the face of leadership turnover — a challenge discussed in greater detail later in this section.

Additional examples of presidential efforts to encourage the initiative's sustainability include restructuring the college governance or committee structure to support Achieving the Dream, integrating Achieving the Dream goals in the strategic planning process, and linking results of Achieving the Dream strategies to the college budgeting process. Furthermore, the

leaders of six colleges have made commitment to Achieving the Dream goals a quality that they look for in new hires. The president of one of these colleges said: “Ever since we have gotten into this, I talk about it [culture of evidence] to future hires. I let them know if they do not have this kind of passion and commitment they may not be happy here.”

### **College leaders delegated responsibility for managing Achieving the Dream**

Almost all the college leaders delegated oversight responsibility for the initiative and were not involved in its day-to-day management. At almost half the colleges, well-respected senior administrators were put in charge. These individuals, who became champions of Achieving the Dream at their colleges, were charged with developing faculty and staff support for the initiative and for keeping the college president up to date on its progress. The involvement of senior administrators in Achieving the Dream was viewed by many college personnel as a sign of leadership commitment. As a faculty member at one college said, “If the president has [the dean of instructional support services and the Achieving the Dream project director] involved in it, then it’s important to the college.”

Implementation of the initiative did suffer at colleges where Achieving the Dream was delegated to part-time staff, outside consultants, or administrators not well known or respected at their colleges. One college dean remarked:

The biggest reason we did not take the grant seriously enough in the beginning was that it was not given to someone on campus that everyone knows and that has a high-enough stature. . . . It is not that the individuals were incompetent, but they did not have the visibility and skills to lead an initiative like this.

### **Leadership turnover**

By the time of the evaluation team visit, nine of the 27 colleges had either recently experienced or were in the process of changing college leaders. Five presidents were hired either just before the Achieving the Dream planning year or in the early years of the initiative; two colleges had interim presidents; and two other college presidents were retiring. The core team leader at one of the colleges with a president preparing to retire said, “There is a better chance of maintaining data-driven/influenced-by-data [policies] if the leadership is stable.”

An additional three colleges had experienced substantial leadership turnover before their involvement with Achieving the Dream. One of these colleges had seven presidents in the ten years prior to the current president’s appointment in 2001. The college’s institutional research director indicated that leadership stability was a critical factor in fostering faculty and staff support for college-wide initiatives:

The presidents haven't been in long enough to have a good set of initiatives of their own, and they haven't communicated down to people of what their initiatives were in a constructive way. We've had a lot of turmoil at the higher level. With [the current president] coming in, it has helped us alleviate this turmoil.

However, if the new leaders are more engaged than their predecessors, leadership turnover could help, rather than hurt, progress toward initiative goals. The institutional research director who is quoted above said that the new president is a strong advocate for Achieving the Dream and had played a major role in inspiring the rest of the college to support the initiative. At another college, the deans and faculty said that the new president has generated enthusiasm and momentum, and people were starting to now think "about what may be possible with the new leadership." Future research on the Round 1 colleges will be able to shed further light on how leadership change affects the sustainability of Achieving the Dream.

#### **Insufficient leadership commitment**

While all the college leaders who were interviewed by the evaluation team voiced support for Achieving the Dream goals and values, the lack of attention to the initiative from some of them hindered the initiative's implementation in a few cases. Presidents at two colleges faced pressing administrative issues that had diverted their attention away from Achieving the Dream. Faculty and staff at one of these colleges described a history of weak leadership and financial stress at the institution. The college did not have an institutional research office, and there was a general distrust of how data were being collected and analyzed at the college. A member of the Achieving the Dream data team said: "We have so many things to fix from the past. I do not think [the president] has time to focus on it. . . . We cannot move forward until we fix things. There are so many things that are wrong. Everyone is struggling to clean up the old stuff."

At the second college, the president considered Achieving the Dream just one project among many and thought that too much was expected of the college for the amount of money attached to the grant. In addition, progress on Achieving the Dream stalled as the president focused on filling several vacant administrative positions. Until these key posts were filled, there was insufficient capacity to carry out the initiative's planning and implementation tasks.

#### **How Essential Is Leadership Commitment?**

Strong and committed leadership in support of institutional change is a key principle of Achieving the Dream, and the field visits revealed a few cases where direct presidential involvement in the initiative appears to have been particularly important. For example, one college's collaboration with the nearby state research university and high school districts was credited to the president's efforts. An institutional research manager at this college said:

Now you have superintendents at every school district saying: “This is a problem. We are supposed to be graduating our students ready for college, and look at the results. There is a problem.” Because of the working relationship between [our president] and the president of [the local university], it has spread to the other superintendents, and it is spreading through their rank and file. Also, that is how we are able to get the IR [institutional research] departments at the K-12 [level] involved in this.

Presidents who are directly engaged in Achieving the Dream may be more likely to support the initiative at critical junctures. A few of the colleges were facing quite severe financial pressures, and presidents who are not personally invested in the initiative may, in such cases, be reluctant to commit the financial and human resources required to scale up successful pilots and institutionalize the culture of evidence. Similarly, direct presidential engagement may be necessary to sustain a culture of evidence after the urgency of reaccreditation efforts and state reporting requirements has faded.

It remains too early to determine how essential direct presidential involvement is for long-term sustainability and institutionalization of the initiative. While many college leaders were not as involved or visibly committed as the Achieving the Dream framing paper recommends, their colleges may still make substantial progress toward fulfilling the initiative’s goals. The success that well-respected and committed administrators — who have been delegated management authority — have had in advancing the initiative suggests that the issue of presidential involvement may be more nuanced than originally envisioned in the Achieving the Dream model of institutional change. The relationship between active presidential engagement and progress and sustainability of the initiative will be an important issue to explore in future field visits to Achieving the Dream colleges.

## **Broad-Based Engagement in Achieving the Dream**

Mobilizing individuals with varied values, beliefs, and interests to work together in support of institutional change can be a formidable undertaking. The process can place college personnel — administrators, faculty and staff — face to face with surprising and sometimes unflattering data on how their students are performing and can upset long-standing ways of doing things. This section outlines how colleges sought to promote broad-based support for and involvement in the initiative. It describes the responses of faculty and staff to Achieving the Dream goals and values, the scope and depth of their engagement with the initiative, and challenges to fostering broad-based support and participation for institutional change.

## **Organizing the College for Broad-Based Support**

The Achieving the Dream framing paper states: “Institutions are not creatures that think and act of their own accord. They are made up of people whose beliefs, attitudes, behaviors and values determine the policies and practices of the institution.”<sup>5</sup> As such, a core principle of the Achieving the Dream model is broad-based engagement of both internal stakeholders and individuals outside the institution. The establishment of core and data teams to help manage the initiative, which would draw from the general college community, was designed to foster widespread support. Some colleges have gone further and made broader changes in staffing and organization to facilitate work toward Achieving the Dream goals.

### **Achieving the Dream core and data teams**

The purposes of the core and data teams (which are described in detail in Chapter 1) are to create energy for change, facilitate sustainability of the initiative, and provide multiple perspectives for optimal solutions.<sup>6</sup> The Achieving the Dream core team was intended to play a leading role in guiding the initiative across each college and was to include the college president, chief academic officer, chief student services officer, institutional research director, and key faculty members. The data team — comprising the institutional research director, faculty members, and administration staff — was created to oversee data collection and analysis. Core and data teams were, in fact, used by most colleges, particularly during the planning phase, when they helped organize Achieving the Dream activities and encourage widespread buy-in.

### **Importance of multiple perspectives on teams**

The inclusion of faculty and staff — in addition to administrators — on core and data teams was intended to facilitate the design and implementation of strategies. Colleges that included a range of perspectives seemed to have an advantage in diagnosing achievement gaps and in fostering communication across the institution. College personnel who previously had little contact with each other began working together to identify priority issues and develop the Achieving the Dream strategies. In one example, insights from the counseling and student development chair and the enrollment management chair — both members of the core team — helped the college recognize that many students were bypassing student orientation. As a result, the college decided to require all students to attend orientation and meet with a counselor.

Teams that did not have active representation from a wide range of college constituencies often struggled to plan and implement Achieving the Dream strategies. For example, one college’s teams progressed fairly far in the planning process without involving deans, who then

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<sup>5</sup>MDC, Inc. (2006a), p. 3.

<sup>6</sup>MDC, Inc. (2006a).

resented being excluded. At another college, the lack of senior administrators on the teams meant that they did not have the authority to make key decisions.

### **Personnel changes to support Achieving the Dream**

In addition to the creation of core and data teams, there were several other ways that colleges were organized to carry out their Achieving the Dream activities. At least ten colleges hired new personnel or reassigned existing staff to support implementation of the initiative. Some colleges used Achieving the Dream funds to hire additional institutional research staff to improve their data analysis capabilities. Two colleges used their own resources to partially fund a new permanent position — director of student success — with responsibility for overseeing implementation of initiative strategies. One of these colleges, a multiple-campus institution, assigned deans to be “campus champions” of Achieving the Dream.

### **Integrating Achieving the Dream functions into the organizational structure**

The extent to which the colleges integrate Achieving the Dream functions into their governance structures will likely have important implications for the initiative’s institutionalization and sustainability. A few colleges have merged their core and data teams into their existing organizational structure. At almost a third of the colleges, Achieving the Dream either led to the creation of a new committee structure or gave new focus to committees that had recently been established. These committees included a “student success, retention, and placement committee” with large faculty representation; a developmental education council with subcommittees; and a 27-member developmental program faculty team. Future field visits to the colleges will follow up on the issue of integrating the initiative into institutional structures.

### **Faculty and Staff Response to Achieving the Dream**

Faculty and staff are often the main torchbearers of college culture; as presidents and senior administrators come and go, faculty and staff tend to shape college culture and preserve institutional memory. Thus, their response to Achieving the Dream has important implications for the successful implementation of the initiative.

#### **Faculty and staff influence in college governance**

Faculty and staff commitment to the initiative may be especially important at colleges where they have a significant role in college governance, as well as at colleges experiencing leadership turnover. As one core team leader of a college with leadership attrition remarked:

Four years from now we will probably have another president, chief academic, chief financial officer. The people that fill these positions may not

come from the ranks. . . . We hope we are able to instill [the Achieving the Dream goals and values] in midlevel managers and faculty leaders so that they expect data-driven decision-making.

A few colleges had a faculty with a strong voice in college governance. For example, at one college with a history of presidential turnover, the evaluation team reported that if the faculty does not like the president, then the president does not stay long. A faculty member at another college remarked: “Frankly, the president is not the one running the school. What matters is whether the people who have to implement it are on board, are behind it and believe in what they are doing.”

#### **Faculty and staff support for Achieving the Dream goals and values**

There was support across the 27 Round 1 colleges for Achieving the Dream’s primary goal of increasing student success. Many faculty and staff indicated that they saw educating disadvantaged students as part of their calling in working at a community college. A faculty member from one college was one of several who focused on helping students of color:

I want to improve the graduation rate. The student of color, the male student, we would like to see them do their part in this society in terms of academics. We would like to keep our male students, African-American, Hispanic male students.

How college leadership introduced Achieving the Dream had an influence on faculty and staff response to the initiative. Several college leaders used the data gathered during the analysis and planning phase to help shape and advance the discussion of achievement gaps. In doing so, administrators generally recognized that faculty and staff may feel threatened by an initiative that seeks to identify and improve problem areas and develop evidence-based decision-making. Most administrators made a concerted effort not to place blame, stressing that the “data will not be used against you.” The assistant vice president for institutional research and learning assessment at one college said:

We certainly didn’t want to go out and say to the math faculty: “Why aren’t you teaching the students? What’s wrong with you?” It wasn’t about criticizing the math faculty in the least.

#### **Broad-based appeal of Achieving the Dream’s language**

Another contributing factor to faculty and staff engagement was the appeal of Achieving the Dream’s language. Some faculty members and staff, especially in more quantitative academic disciplines, responded positively to Achieving the Dream’s focus on data-driven decision-making and the use of data to build a culture of evidence. Other instructors and staff were

receptive to an initiative geared toward helping disadvantaged students “achieve the dream” of graduating from college. For example, one faculty member used the language of Achieving the Dream to tell the story of how an instructor from her undergraduate years was essential to *her* academic and career success:

They didn’t have Achieving the Dream around when I was in school. But that one person was my Achieving the Dream. That instructor was my Achieving the Dream. He saw beyond me, saw beyond my faults, and was able to see what I needed to be successful.

### **Breadth and Depth of Engagement**

Despite the broad appeal of Achieving the Dream, the evaluation team found widely varying levels of understanding of and engagement with the initiative among key constituencies from college to college. About half the colleges reported that Achieving the Dream had substantially increased collaboration among administrators, faculty, and staff and had begun to reduce turf battles among departments. Reorganized staffing and governance structures — along with strategies and work teams that incorporated multiple perspectives — facilitated dialogue among the individuals working on the initiative. At a multiple-campus institution, the individual colleges were beginning to collaborate on a broader scale. According to one interviewee:

Faculty and staff are working together. Our task forces include both faculty and staff, and both sides of the campus are working together. That creates a good environment. It isn’t always easy to get staff and faculty to cooperate, but this has helped.

At another large college, Achieving the Dream has increased communication and collaboration between academic and student services; at two much smaller colleges, the initiative has encouraged more dialogue between the developmental education department and other academic departments at the colleges. The evaluation team also found evidence at several colleges that the initiative has increased communication between the institutional research (IR) office and other academic and student services departments.

Faculty and staff at a few colleges attributed part of the initiative’s successful implementation to the participation of faculty leaders who were capable of shaping opinions. A faculty member at one college said:

On our campus, I think, with our campus champion and coordinator, they have had a good voice to promote it. She’s been there for a long time, so she carries a lot of weight to promote it.

However, the evaluation team found that, outside of those directly involved in the initiative, there was not broad understanding and engagement among college personnel; relatively few faculty members and staff at most of the colleges seemed aware of the specifics of Achieving the Dream. For example, at 15 of the colleges, faculty and staff who were interviewed by the evaluation team indicated that the majority of their colleagues had only a vague awareness of the initiative. Furthermore, faculty and staff who *were* knowledgeable and involved were often the same people who were likely to be involved in college activities overall. For example, an instructor who was a member of the core team at her college said: “I’m the innovator in my group on my campus. I tend to get involved with new programs when they come up.”

While the Round 1 colleges are still in the early stages of implementation, the lack of widespread understanding and engagement in the initiative raises the question of how successful the colleges will be when they scale up piloted strategies. The evaluation team found that, at this early point in the initiative, the strategies in place across many of the colleges were generally small. If most faculty and staff at these colleges define Achieving the Dream only by these discrete strategies — such as a reorganized developmental education program or a few learning communities — then the initiative is not likely to gain broader acceptance across the colleges, let alone transform institutional culture.

Turnover at the colleges is another area of concern. Turnover was not limited to chancellors, presidents, and chief executive officers; seven colleges experienced substantial personnel attrition either among the leadership of the core team or among those coordinating the initiative. College personnel at several of these institutions felt that this turnover was partly responsible for the difficulty they had fostering more widespread faculty and staff engagement. For example, a series of midlevel administrators at one college were given responsibility for the initiative, and faculty and staff support as well as progress toward implementing Achieving the Dream strategies suffered.

### **Student and Community Engagement**

The evaluation team’s visits to the colleges revealed a general lack of involvement in the initiative thus far by students and members of the outside community. Several colleges have solicited views from both community members and students — primarily through focus groups or surveys — and a couple included community leaders on core or data teams. Yet most of the colleges did not seem to have fully involved local community members or students in their Achieving the Dream activities.

## Student engagement

The Achieving the Dream framing paper states that “student involvement is essential to ensure that college policies and practices match students’ needs.”<sup>7</sup> Direct student involvement should help college personnel better understand students’ needs and perspectives and design strategies that promote student retention and success.

At almost half the Round 1 colleges, student views were an important consideration in identifying key problem areas during the Achieving the Dream planning year. A majority of colleges had participated in the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), and several used CCSSE results to help diagnose problem areas. Yet, for some colleges, incorporating student views into the college’s decision-making process was a new development; in one case, college personnel reported that Achieving the Dream was the first time the institution had asked students about their overall college experiences.

Many colleges used surveys and focus groups to help identify problem areas, but the colleges were not making a concerted effort to include students in the process of designing initiative strategies. Achieving the Dream strategies that are designed and implemented without student participation may have unanticipated negative consequences. As discussed in Chapter 5, several colleges implemented strategies that included more stringent requirements for developmental education, as well as participation in student orientation and student success courses. However, some faculty and staff voiced concern that, considering the number of educational alternatives available to students, these new requirements would simply encourage students to pursue their education elsewhere. Others reported a perception among some developmental education students that the college was trying to keep them in developmental courses in order to generate additional tuition revenue. Involving students in developing college policy could reduce these types of misconceptions and lead to more effective strategies for increasing student retention and success.

Colleges where the student demographics are changing may be particularly affected by not including students in the design of initiative strategies. The evaluation team identified at least 14 colleges that were experiencing changing student demographics, which may mean that student attitudes, needs, and preparedness for college are also changing. If this is the case, then administrative and faculty perceptions about what strategies work best for students may be outdated. Student involvement in Achieving the Dream may also be especially important at colleges where there is a cultural divide between the student population and the college faculty and administrators.

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<sup>7</sup>MDC, Inc. (2006a), p. 4.

## Community engagement

At least eleven colleges were working with educational and civic organizations in their communities as part of their Achieving the Dream strategies. For example, six colleges had outreach efforts in high schools or local universities, and another five were working with community service organizations and the public at large. In addition, the opinion research organization Public Agenda was working with several colleges to organize focus groups with community members and other outreach activities.

More extensive dialogue between the colleges and community leaders would likely increase community support for the initiative's goals and help colleges identify barriers to student success. College personnel and students generally come from the surrounding communities, so a comprehensive understanding of local attitudes and values might help colleges design and implement more effective Achieving the Dream strategies. Individuals at several colleges discussed how their colleges were or were not reflective of the communities in which they were located and what effect that had on the campus. For example, at one college, personnel came largely from the same community and had the same cultural background as their students, which led to a very tight-knit college community. At another college, there was tension between younger and older faculty that was caused, in part, by differences in their cultural backgrounds and age and their resulting choice of neighborhoods.

## Challenges to Broad Engagement

According to the Achieving the Dream model, bringing to light unflattering data on student outcomes can create cognitive dissonance among college personnel "by underscoring gaps between personal/institutional values and actual institutional performance."<sup>8</sup> The implementation research revealed that while faculty and staff knew that many of their students were not reaching their educational and career goals, much of the data that arose from the diagnosing and planning phase still came as a shock. Administrators, faculty, and staff at two-thirds of the colleges said that they were surprised — even alarmed — by the data that were analyzed during the planning year. In general, these personnel, even those with many years of community college experience, reported feeling deeply disappointed by the results. An instructor at one college where Achieving the Dream data were presented said:

The data presented in first meetings regarding [Achieving the Dream] showed the number of students lost and was shocking to staff and faculty. Most were not aware of how the data was measured, how that compared to

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<sup>8</sup>MDC, Inc. (2006a), p. 9.

other schools, or even what their student’s goals were; but even so, they still found it pretty shocking.

According to the Achieving the Dream model of institutional change, this dissonance — between faculty and staff intentions and actual results — can be used to motivate them to improve student performance. The evaluation team interviewed many college personnel who reacted to the unflattering data by saying that — considering the tremendous social and educational challenges many of their students face — they and their institutions need to do more to help students succeed. There were faculty and staff at each college who demonstrated a willingness to explore barriers to student success and were searching for new ways to assist underperforming students.

As discussed in Chapter 3, developing a culture of evidence can be threatening to faculty and staff, who may view it as an effort to evaluate their performance or a critical judgment on their previous work. Despite the care that college presidents and administrators took while presenting unflattering student outcomes data, faculty and staff at 13 colleges indicated that they did not trust how the administration would use the data. And while faculty and staff were often eager to implement new strategies to increase student success, entrenched attitudes and perspectives posed additional barriers for both broad-based participation and Achieving the Dream implementation, as discussed below.

#### **Faculty/staff who feel no responsibility for the lack of student success**

Developmental faculty and counselors generally expressed the view that instructors need to reach the students “where they are at.” However, while sharing the goal of improving student success, some faculty and staff believed that achieving that goal was largely out of their hands. The baseline implementation research revealed 13 colleges where some faculty and staff seemed to feel little responsibility for their institution’s poor student outcomes and were not open to changing their approach to students. An instructor at one college was not convinced that faculty could have much of an impact on student learning:

I think for a lot of us it is not so much what we do or not do in the classroom, but rather that students are underprepared. They need more hand-holding than what college is supposed to provide. Of course, we want to improve everyone’s standing in college. That is why we are here. I’m not so sure that the classroom is where it happens.

This attitude appeared to be more prevalent among faculty in degree-credit programs (as opposed to those in developmental programs), which poses a challenge as pilot strategies are brought to scale and as developmental students move into college-level courses: A few colleges have partnered with area high schools to improve placement-test preparation prior to matriculation. This should lead to more students’ bypassing developmental education and placing directly

into college-level courses, yet this would make the attitudes and values of college-level faculty even more relevant to incoming students.

#### **Faculty/staff who blame other colleagues for lack of student success**

Some faculty and staff suggested that college personnel in other departments and divisions were responsible for the lack of student success at their colleges. This reaction seemed to be partly attributable to the entrenched departmental silos that have existed at these colleges for years — between student services and academic programs, developmental education and college-level programs, full-time and adjunct faculty, among campuses, and between institutional research departments and the administration and faculty. These silos, and the resulting lack of trust and communication among college personnel, impede the ability of faculty and staff to work collaboratively for the benefit of students. As one faculty member of a multiple-campus institution said:

Communication is a huge issue between the campuses, between the different levels in the college and administration and on campus, between departments and programs. It seems like for poor students it's the luck of the draw in who they ask to what they get.

#### **Faculty/staff who believe that a focus on student retention undermines educational quality**

Achieving the Dream goals focus on successful course completion and student retention; they do not include specific learning outcomes. Some faculty voiced concern about this approach, suggesting that the curriculum would be “watered down” or efforts would be made to pass students that would compromise academic rigor. One college faculty member said of her unprepared students: “I’m not doing anyone a favor if I pass them.” And some faculty members at another college, which no longer requires the exit exam in order to pass out of developmental math, viewed this policy as lowering educational standards.

#### **Competing attitudes among faculty/staff about addressing the issues of race and poverty**

Some colleges were addressing issues of race and poverty directly as part of their Achieving the Dream strategies. One college’s strategies included diversity training for faculty and staff. At another college, one of the all-day professional development sessions that was offered as part of the initiative focused on poverty. At another college, the Achieving the Dream co-chair described her college’s progress in discussing equity and diversity, despite the controversy that it can create:

You cannot just walk in and say we're going to talk about diversity. [The president] probably gets a lot of objections from various parts of the community. I have to work with the people of color because I am a woman of color. I work with other groups, professional setting groups — the faculty and students. I'm glad to see us talk much more about diversity.

Yet faculty and staff held a range of conflicting attitudes on the issues of race and poverty, and some college personnel had a vision of equity and excellence that differed from the Achieving the Dream framing paper, which states that “equity” does not mean treating all students the same. It means creating policies and practices that . . . offer each student the support he or she needs to succeed.”<sup>9</sup> For example, several faculty and administrators said, “We treat all students the same.” At one college, there was ambivalence about whether programs should include wealthier and older students as well as students from traditionally disadvantaged groups. Another college member was disappointed that the college was still not developing specific programs to help disadvantaged students:

I wish that we could pull low-income, first-generation, students of color, but I realize we can't just pull those students out — because that's discriminating. I'm disappointed that we are helping everyone, to help some. I would like a more concentrated effort. But, I realize we can't do that. We can't just pull those students out.

## **The Role of Achieving the Dream Coaches**

Developing a commitment to data-driven change among a wide range of college constituencies was a significant challenge for most Round 1 colleges. Recognizing the difficulty of the task ahead, the Achieving the Dream partners assigned colleges a coach — usually a former community college president — to provide guidance at each stage of the institutional change process: diagnosing problem areas; designing, implementing, and evaluating strategies; and then institutionalizing those efforts across the college.

At 23 of the colleges, administrators, faculty, and staff who were interviewed by the evaluation team voiced unanimous support for their coaches. A couple of the college presidents said that they considered the coaches to be a positive and distinctive feature of the initiative. The president of one college said: “I've never had a grant that has come with that kind of support before. That is an interesting approach. It is impossible for me to forget about Achieving the Dream with [the coach] there.”

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<sup>9</sup>MDC, Inc. (2006a), p. 3.

The evaluation team found that Achieving the Dream coaches played an important role in fostering leadership commitment and generating support for the initiative among faculty and staff. Several coaches helped college leaders and Achieving the Dream managers introduce the initiative to college constituencies. One college president described how the coach was a valuable resource in fostering support among faculty and staff:

You can't be a prophet in your own land, so an outside observer can make a better observation sometimes. They can't be accused of being biased. They have made marvelous observations about things. People listened to their observations.

At 16 of the colleges, college personnel reported that the external perspective the coaches brought to campus helped them identify problem areas and design strategies. Because they were not from the college, coaches could discuss student outcomes data without being perceived as having a hidden agenda. An administrator responsible for initiative oversight said of the coach: “The first time our coach came — the man does provoke discussion. Our VP for student affairs was there. The coach said, ‘You know, [the college] doesn’t seem to value graduation.’ He articulated an elephant in the room that we hadn’t been dealing with.”

As the colleges moved into the implementation year of the initiative, several colleges described their coach as a “critical friend,” someone who kept the college focused on high-priority areas and accountable for results. Working closely with administrators, faculty, and staff who were directly engaged in Achieving the Dream activities, these coaches provided a useful reminder of what the college committed to by agreeing to participate in the initiative. Coaches also helped colleges find synergies between Achieving the Dream, federally funded grants, and accreditation efforts.

A few colleges, while generally pleased with their coaches, wanted more help designing and implementing effective strategies. For example, the vice president of education and student services at one of these colleges said she was hoping for additional help communicating to the local community the importance of data-driven strategies for student success. College personnel at two other colleges did not feel they were receiving enough direct assistance from their coaches; these individuals wanted fewer “big picture” ideas and more help with the on-the-ground details of implementing the initiative. Colleges that felt their coaches were a particularly poor fit with their institutions were assigned new coaches and reported being satisfied with these replacements.

With the help of the coaches, many Round 1 colleges have made great strides in developing support for Achieving the Dream goals and values. Yet, the evaluation team found that only a relatively small subgroup of college personnel was directly engaged in Achieving the Dream activities. Much work remains to be done to foster broad-based, sustainable participation in the initiative and in its specific strategies, which are the focus of Chapter 5.

## Chapter 5

# Strategies for Enhancing Student Success

### Introduction

As highlighted in Chapter 2, Achieving the Dream established five performance indicators for colleges to assess student progress in the initiative:<sup>1</sup>

1. Successfully complete remedial or developmental courses and progress to credit-bearing courses
2. Enroll in and successfully complete college-level “gatekeeper” courses
3. Complete the courses they take, with a grade of C or higher
4. Reenroll from one semester to the next
5. Earn certificates and/or degrees

With these goals in mind, the 27 Round 1 colleges developed implementation plans during the Achieving the Dream’s first-year planning phase, outlining a diverse range of initiatives to reach these five goals and improve student outcomes. In their implementation plans, colleges typically included college-wide planning efforts and strategic initiatives, combined with targeted strategies, such as college success courses, intensive tutoring, and learning communities, all designed to improve outcomes for specific groups of students. This chapter describes specific strategies that colleges had implemented on their campuses as of spring 2006, based on information gathered by the evaluation team during the 2006 field visits. Information was also gathered from colleges’ implementation plans and Achieving the Dream coaches’ reports.

Achieving the Dream afforded the colleges considerable flexibility in selecting strategies, with the initiative’s core team at each college deciding which strategies to implement, how many strategies to undertake, and which populations to target. Colleges also defined their own implementation schedules and the desired scale of the intervention. Diverse in nature, colleges’ strategies fall into eight broad categories:

- Advising initiatives
- Developmental education reforms
- First year experience
- High school and community outreach
- Instructional strategies
- Professional development for faculty and staff

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<sup>1</sup>MDC, Inc. (2006a).

- Student support services
- Tutoring/supplemental instruction

Colleges reported using various decision-making processes to identify areas for improvement on their campuses as well as appropriate strategies to address them. Some colleges linked planning efforts directly to data analysis. For example, some colleges reported that cohort analysis helped narrow down groups of students most in need of targeted interventions. Some used broad analysis of college data outcomes to identify areas of focus, such as student feedback from the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) (described in Chapter 1) and other surveys. Others reported that, while the data analysis informed their work, strategies were also chosen based on other compelling factors, including existing infrastructure, capacity, or planning initiatives that readily aligned with Achieving the Dream's goals; the overall numbers of students likely to benefit from a selected strategy; the school's ability to "scale up" the strategy over time; and the professional judgment of college leaders. College administrators also reported being positively influenced by opportunities to learn about particular strategies — such as college success courses and learning communities — in presentations about promising practices at the Achieving the Dream strategy institutes (held each winter for participating colleges) and at other professional venues.

By spring 2006, the colleges had begun piloting or implementing at least one strategy. Some of the colleges were working on multiple efforts — for example, overhauling student support services while also modifying cutoff test scores for deciding which students should be referred to developmental classes. Many schools were heavily engaged in Achieving the Dream's charge of institutional transformation and concentrated their efforts on affecting broad policy, as outlined in Chapter 6, with implementation of more targeted strategies slated for fall 2007, once appropriate management structures were in place.

While nearly all the colleges had begun at least one strategy to improve student outcomes, data collected by the evaluation team indicate that many of these efforts had been partially implemented and were small in scale. Some colleges were sufficiently advanced in their efforts to have their strategies characterized as having reached full implementation — wherein the strategies were operating at a desired scale and reaching their target population — often because the colleges had built on existing infrastructure and programs.<sup>2</sup> The majority can be characterized as either (1) having partially implemented their strategies, meaning implementation was occurring on a small scale, or (2) being in the early phases of implementation, meaning planning was still the main focus but staff had been dedicated to the effort and implementation

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<sup>2</sup>Forty-one strategies at 23 colleges met the criteria for classification as fully implemented. See Appendix C for more details.

plans were fully fleshed out.<sup>3</sup> In many cases, these latter colleges were committed to implementing multiple efforts, were building programs from scratch, or were implementing large-scale changes, such as reorganizing student services. For these colleges, an earlier phase of implementation did not necessarily indicate that they were any less focused on Achieving the Dream but that they needed to dedicate significant time to planning processes before they could effectively launch an initiative. A very small number of colleges were still in their planning phase and intended to begin implementing their strategies in fall 2007.

While the Round 1 colleges have made solid progress in developing strategies, much work remains to be done to implement strong initiatives, reach appropriate target populations, and bring efforts to a scale that can reach significant numbers of students. The evaluation team will return to campuses in 2009 to determine whether the foundation that the colleges have laid is robust enough to sustain these initiatives over time.

## Overview of College Strategies

By spring 2006, Achieving the Dream colleges had implemented a wide range of strategies to promote student success. Table 5.1 summarizes the types of strategies that the colleges adopted, grouping them into eight broad categories. These categories are then broken down by specific efforts — for example, advising encompasses “early alert systems” as well as case management advising efforts. The table also reports on the number of strategies that the colleges have adopted, to provide a picture of the frequency of strategies across campuses.<sup>4</sup> The matrix in Appendix C provides descriptions of the specific strategies the colleges adopted under each of the eight broad categories, including information on target populations, scale (when known), and what level of implementation the strategy has reached.

Five strategies are highlighted in this chapter because of their prevalence across the campuses or because of the creativity of their approach:

1. Advising initiatives, particularly early alert and case management advising
2. First-year experience interventions, including student orientation and college success courses<sup>5</sup>
3. Tutoring and supplemental instruction
4. Learning communities

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<sup>3</sup>Eighty-two strategies at 24 colleges were deemed partially implemented, and 35 strategies at 20 colleges were classified as “early implementation.” See Appendix C for more details.

<sup>4</sup>Note that many colleges have implemented more than one strategy.

<sup>5</sup>While “orientation” is a distinct strategy at some colleges, college success courses generally include an orientation component, and thus these categories are combined in this discussion.

## Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count

**Table 5.1**

### **Strategies Implemented at Round 1 Colleges as of Spring 2006, by Type and Frequency**

Strategy	Description	Number of Colleges
<b><u>Advising</u></b>	<b>Helping to keep students on track academically</b>	<b>21</b>
Early alert system	Identifying students at risk based on poor attendance and academic performance; connecting them with services (such as tutoring, counseling, financial assistance)	8
Individual learning plans/ Case management advising	Providing additional advising for potentially high-risk incoming students; may cover such topics as navigating college, career choices, goals, and balancing school and family life	9
Use of technology	Utilizing technology to better track students receiving advising services as well as to help advisers monitor student progress	4
<b><u>Developmental education</u></b>	<b>Addressing achievement gaps for students in developmental education and increasing the number of students moving on to college-level classes</b>	<b>15</b>
Accelerated course	Allowing students to take a developmental class at a faster pace to help them complete course sequence in a more timely manner; mainly targeted to students who barely missed cutoff scores	3
Policy change	Undertaking such efforts as adopting new assessment tools, implementing exit exams, or adjusting cutoff scores	6
Reform	Revamping curricula; creating developmental education departments, which some colleges integrate into academic divisions	6
<b><u>First-year experience</u></b>	<b>Helping students begin college with the tools they need to succeed</b>	<b>29</b>
College success course	Offering first-semester/first-year courses focused on student success skills; may cover such topics as computer literacy, study skills, financial aid, course planning, enrollment, goal setting, and time management skills	16
Student orientation	Creating positive first impressions with students by offering assistance with placement tests, understanding placement test results, creating schedules, applying for financial aid, and taking campus tours	8

(continued)

**Table 5.1 (continued)**

Strategy	Description	Number of Colleges
Student workshops	Offering individual sessions on topics related to student success, such as financial aid, using the library, résumé writing, or goal setting	1
Testing assistance	Offering sessions that prepare students for college placement tests by acclimating students to the type of questions asked and the test format	4
<b><u>High school / community outreach</u></b>	<b>Conducting outreach to high school students and community members to address the increasing number applicants unprepared for college-level work</b>	<b>17</b>
Bridge programs	Providing summer programs that review basic math, reading, and writing skills expected at the college level	3
Community outreach	Conducting community meetings, informational fairs, and events to increase knowledge about college requirements, testing, costs, and financial aid	6
Dual enrollment	Providing high school students the opportunity to take classes for credit at the community college	1
Outreach to local high schools	Working with high schools, increasing use of assessment/placement tests to increase college readiness; efforts to align high school graduation competencies with college entrance requirements	7
<b><u>Instructional strategies</u></b>	<b>Improving outcomes through pedagogical techniques and cohort learning</b>	<b>13</b>
Collaborative learning	Teaching technique that encourages students to be active participants in learning process; encourages peer learning and interaction	2
Learning communities	Engaging students by enrolling as a cohort in clustered courses; colleges may have LCs in college-level and developmental courses	11
<b><u>Professional development</u></b>	<b>Providing opportunities for faculty, staff, and administration to attend conferences, trainings, workshops, and lectures focused on ways to improve student success and the learning climate on campus</b>	<b>22</b>
Campuswide	Providing opportunities for faculty and staff to learn about efforts at other community colleges; data-driven decision-making, bridging academic and student services, diversity and campus-climate issues	9
Classroom-based	Providing opportunities, primarily for faculty, to learn about innovative classroom techniques and other classroom-related best practices	13

(continued)

**Table 5.1 (continued)**

Strategy	Description	Number of Colleges
<b><u>Student support services</u></b>	<b>Unifying student services delivery, bridging academic and student support programs to better serve and motivate students</b>	<b>18</b>
Access	Making it easier for students to obtain services by offering extended evening and weekend hours; improving marketing of available services	4
Mentoring/coaching	Providing at-risk students with guidance and support in navigating college life; may target traditionally underrepresented students	8
Registration	Improving registration processes by providing information, recruiting faculty and staff to guide students, or creating self-guided registration	3
Student services center	Colocating student services in a one-stop center for nonacademic student needs (such as financial aid, advising, admissions, career services)	3
<b><u>Tutoring/supplemental instruction</u></b>	<b>Providing access to assistance with material outside the classroom</b>	<b>23</b>
Learning centers	Creating a designated area that houses tutoring, computers for self-paced learning materials, and other resources for learning	9
Supplemental instruction	Hiring successful students to assist an instructor by providing additional teaching and tutoring to students both inside and outside the classroom	8
Tutoring	Providing free one-on-one help to students outside the classroom	6

SOURCES: MDRC and CCRC field research data.

5. Professional development, including training in cultural competence and racial dynamics

The characteristics and goals of each of the five strategies are described below, and specific examples from unnamed Round 1 colleges are highlighted.

### **Advising Initiatives**

Ideally, academic advising is a process that assists students in clarifying college and career goals and in developing plans for realizing those goals. However, this important function is

often a low priority for college administrators and suffers from underbudgeting, understaffing, and ineffective processes that do not meet student and institutional needs.<sup>6</sup> To improve advising services, Achieving the Dream colleges are implementing two main strategies: (1) intensifying the advising process and (2) creating early alert systems to identify students who are struggling academically as early as possible in the semester and to direct them to appropriate resources.

Nine of the 27 Achieving the Dream colleges are implementing new advising models, such as intrusive advising, individual learning plans, and case management advising to provide students with more guidance on setting goals and creating plans to achieve their goals. In intrusive academic advising, which has been identified as a promising practice in the field, the adviser facilitates communication, coordinates learning experiences through course and career planning and program progress reviews, and acts as a referral agent to other campus services.<sup>7</sup> The fundamental elements of intrusive advising include frequent feedback, accountability, and a caring relationship with the adviser.<sup>8</sup>

Eight of the 27 Achieving the Dream colleges are implementing early alert systems as a means of reducing student attrition. Early alert systems have been highlighted in the research as one of the best advising practices for addressing student retention.<sup>9</sup> These programs provide a mechanism for faculty, mentors, and tutors to identify students who are not performing well academically or who have the potential to fail courses as a result of excess absences. Early alert programs intervene before a student drops out, soon enough in the semester so he or she still has a chance of passing. Often the intervention focuses on both academic and nonacademic problems that students face, and some provide emergency financial or transportation assistance, for example. Early alert programs not only let students know where to seek assistance but provide them with a sense of a connection to their college.<sup>10</sup>

#### Profile A: Large-scale, comprehensive student advising system

One large community college is in the early stages of implementing a comprehensive student advising system. Using results from the Community College Survey of Student Engagement, the college learned that its advising process was confusing and complex and was a contributing factor to low retention rates. The new student advising approach promotes a personalized, student-centered environment across the college's campuses that provides integrated, high-quality educational information and planning services that address students' needs from initial contact through graduation, transfer, and job placement. Counselors address academic

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<sup>6</sup>Noel-Levitz Incorporated (2006).

<sup>7</sup>Backhus (1989); Connell (2003); Earl (1988); Glennen and Baxley (1985); Holmes (2000).

<sup>8</sup>Thayer (2000).

<sup>9</sup>Tinto (2000).

<sup>10</sup>Wild and Ebbers (2002).

probation, suspensions, personal issues, and career counseling. Academic advisers focus on more logistical concerns regarding scheduling, degree/certificate completion, testing, and financial aid. Advisers have an assigned caseload and meet with each student at key points in their progression through school. The advising department has adopted a more proactive approach to reaching the students who needed services most and has implemented a case management, or intrusive, advising model for students in college for the first time.

#### **Profile B: Early alert system**

A medium-size college is piloting an early alert system in all developmental classes, with the goal of expanding the system to all courses. Developmental education instructors monitor student behaviors (for instance, inconsistent class attendance or poor performance on early tests or quizzes) to identify students at risk of failing. The instructors turn in referral forms on the students they identify as “at risk” before the midpoint of the semester. An early alert counselor contacts these students to offer support and referrals to available resources offered by the college. Depending on the needs of the student, the early alert counselor may refer the student for tutoring, workshops (for example, on study skills or time management), counseling, or financial assistance. A Campus Learning Center also has special tutors for students identified through the early alert program. The early alert counselor follows up on referrals made to at-risk students and keeps the developmental education instructors informed.

#### **First-Year Experience: Orientation and College Success Courses**

Many students arrive at community colleges with unrealistic expectations about what it takes to succeed, resulting in a troubled start and little incentive to reenroll after their first semester or year. To reverse this trend, several community colleges are implementing various combinations of enhanced student orientation sessions and “college success” courses to improve the first-year experience.

New student orientation has existed for years at many community colleges. Traditionally, orientation is a one-time event at the start of fall classes in which students are inundated with information. Many Achieving the Dream colleges are revising their approach to student orientation by spreading out the content over the course of a semester, rather than offering orientation as a one-time event. Although the specific title may vary depending on the institution, a college success course typically focuses on developing the skill set critical to overall student success, regardless of the program of study. Courses might include a focus on understanding basic college rules, terms, and procedures (such as course registration, credit hours, course prerequisites, course withdrawal, and credit versus noncredit courses); learning how to navigate to get assistance with academic, financial, or personal concerns; and developing study skills and

time management skills. However, college success classes usually do not count for credit, presenting a marketing challenge for colleges in encouraging students to participate.

Sixteen of 27 Achieving the Dream colleges are implementing a college success course as one of their strategies, and they employ a variety of delivery approaches. This variation includes whether the course is a required or an elective course, the type of instructional delivery (for instance, face-to-face or on-line), number of credit hours, course length, and course target group (all students, developmental education, or program specific).

#### **Profile A: Small-scale, voluntary, multiple-course formats**

One community college is piloting a college success course in health technology programs. The one-credit course is voluntary, flexible, and offered in three formats: a 16-week traditional (face-to-face) class, an eight-week on-line course, and an eight-week hybrid course. The eight-week mini-courses are designed to capture students referred by an early alert program, and faculty advisers play a critical role in steering students toward these courses. They target students within the health technology program who are newly enrolled or who are reenrolling. One of the challenges of offering a voluntary college success course is convincing the targeted students to participate. As one individual commented, “It is very hard to convince the students to take the class because it is not required, but recommended.” On the other hand, mandating the course would affect overall program completion requirements and course scheduling, and it might depress student recruitment and retention. Administrators at this college are reluctant to mandate the college success course because of the diverse student population they serve, many of whom do not necessarily need a college success course. And, with several major universities close by, requiring such a course may put the community college at a competitive disadvantage in the battle to attract such students. An important part of this college’s culture is to offer students flexibility and to avoid a “one size fits all” approach regarding college success courses.

#### **Profile B: Large-scale, mostly mandatory college success courses**

One small college is implementing its college success course on a larger scale. Prior to the introduction of the college success course, students attended a one-day, one-credit orientation session for all new students. The college recently implemented a one-credit student success course that students can complete in a four- or eight-week format. As of spring 2006, the college had plans to scale up to 30 course sections by fall 2006. Incoming students are required to take the course, and many other students take the course as well. Many of the student success courses are aligned with particular learning communities. A senior administrator at this college commented, “Some of the prime things students are missing were how to study for courses, how to prepare for tests, going through course materials, doing assignments in a timely manner, financial aid, how to fill out these forms and take care of these needs.”

## **Tutoring and Supplemental Instruction**

Eight of the 27 Round 1 colleges are implementing supplemental instruction, and six of the 27 are offering tutoring. An academic assistance program that uses peer-assisted study sessions, supplemental instruction is typically attached to specific developmental education or “gatekeeper” courses in which students have historically experienced difficulty. Students learn how to integrate course content and study skills while working together. Supplemental instruction sessions operate as regularly scheduled, informal review sessions in which students compare notes, discuss readings, develop organizational tools, and predict test items. Peer leaders attend course lectures, take notes, read assigned materials, and conduct supplemental instruction sessions each week. Ideally, the leader is a “model student,” a facilitator who helps students to integrate course content and learning/study strategies.<sup>11</sup> In comparison, a tutor typically offers assistance to students, often individually or through a lab, on a general subject area.

### **Profile A: Supplemental instruction in developmental math courses**

One college decided to target its supplemental instruction efforts in developmental and gatekeeper math courses. In fall 2005, the math department piloted two hours of supplemental instruction in addition to the current one-hour lab in two sections of the highest-level developmental math course. The college found that, compared with those in regular classes, students in the supplemental instruction sections had greater increases between pre- and posttest scores and higher rates of completion. One administrator noted that some positive side-effects of supplemental instruction are that students are now talking to math instructors outside class and faculty are beginning to better understand the student perspective.

### **Profile B: Growing an existing tutoring strategy**

One small college decided to expand an existing tutoring strategy using Achieving the Dream funds by improving the tutoring center facilities, increasing the number of tutors available, and increasing the range of courses with tutoring options. Prior to joining the initiative, this college had a certified tutoring program that had received national recognition. Tutor selection at this college is competitive, and many students who complete the tutoring program successfully have secured tutoring positions at other colleges and universities when they transfer. This college cited its own nonexperimental research to justify expanding the program: Students who used tutoring in the first four weeks of school and continued to avail themselves of these services had pass rates 27 percent higher than students who did not take advantage of tutoring.

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<sup>11</sup>University of Missouri-Kansas City, “Supplemental Instruction”; Web site: [www.umkc.edu/cad/SI](http://www.umkc.edu/cad/SI).

To be successful, both tutoring and supplemental instruction depend on recruiting and maintaining students to work in the programs, which has proved to be a common challenge for some Round 1 colleges. A faculty member at one large college described the intended process:

In supplemental instruction, you pick a student that took the class with the instructor. You are familiar with the student, they are familiar with you, they know how you teach. They attend the class with you like any other student. After lecture they have an hour or two set aside to work with students, specifically from your class. They have your notes, they know what you expect.

Using students to serve as supplemental instructors has particular advantages — for one, student tutors are familiar with specific course content and the instructional approach. One student development coordinator noted how peer-to-peer learning benefits the student tutors:

It's really more of a facilitating collaborative partnership . . . with the student leaders and the peers, where the student leaders are also getting something out [of it] by helping other students and knowing what they are going through, having taken the class as well.

However, another administrator at one college described how an important challenge to large-scale supplemental instruction efforts has been finding and maintaining student tutors:

It's been difficult to be able to find tutors. We are surprised at the difficulty. Faculty will identify them, and it seems like such a great deal for the student: "You are doing well, we're going to pay you money to help others." And, they sign up and are ready and then don't show up for the training. Or, one went through the training and then didn't want to do it. So, I'm not sure what's happening out there, but we're looking at it.

Early impressions suggest that this issue may not be related to the size of the college. For example, one of the more successful student tutoring programs is located at a smaller college. This suggests that other factors, such as the ability to compete in the local labor market or overall student engagement, may be more important. Colleges who select supplemental instruction and/or tutoring as a strategy may want to consider increasing the incentives for participating tutors .

## **Learning Communities**

Highlighted at a number of Achieving the Dream conferences and strategy institutes, learning communities are a curricular strategy that some Round 1 colleges have adopted. In its most basic form, a learning community involves the block scheduling of students taking two or

more courses together.<sup>12</sup> More advanced models share several additional characteristics: Faculty integrate curricula across courses; learning is “active,” with a focus on student participation and learning outcomes; and academic and social interactions among students are encouraged. Learning communities are often organized during a student’s first year, when the need for creating social attachments is considered greatest.<sup>13</sup>

Eleven colleges have implemented learning communities as part of their Achieving the Dream strategy. In many cases, colleges had offered learning communities prior to joining the initiative, and they decided to expand or restart their programs. Not all colleges are including developmental courses in their learning communities; some target developmental students, while others focus on students in credit-bearing classes. When asked how their learning communities programs have changed since Achieving the Dream, many administrators described a process of better integration across departments. Learning community experts suggest that such integration is a crucial factor in sustaining communities for the long term.<sup>14</sup> Administrators also frequently cited the need to analyze the effectiveness of their communities.

#### **Profile A: Linking college success courses and gateway/developmental education classes**

In this model, a college has linked two types of classes to student success courses: the three gateway courses with the highest enrollment and three developmental education courses. These learning communities are a part of a larger campus initiative to improve student outcomes in the first year, particularly in math, and the college plans to alter the student success course curriculum to emphasize math outcomes. There is also a heavy emphasis on creating community among faculty members, who are encouraged to engage in joint curriculum planning and to share information on student progress. Six communities were scheduled to come on line in fall 2006.

#### **Profile B: Learning communities with a cultural/experiential component**

One college is running several multidisciplinary learning communities — some that link developmental education to credit-bearing courses and others that link two credit-bearing courses in different departments and disciplines. For example, one learning community links developmental education reading with a credit-bearing sociology class; another links credit-bearing classes in American Literature and Art History. There is a strong focus on integrating curricula, reinforcing common themes across classes, and coordinating readings assignments. Learning communities also include an experiential component; students and their teachers visit

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<sup>12</sup>Gabelnick, MacGregor, Matthews, and Smith (1990).

<sup>13</sup>Tinto (1993); Taylor, Moore, MacGregor, and Lindblad (2003).

<sup>14</sup>Shapiro and Levine (1999).

local cultural institutions and historical sites that are related to the themes presented in their linked classes.

#### **Profile C: Focus on developmental classes and students transitioning into college-level courses**

One midsize college had three learning communities in place in spring 2006, two with a focus on developmental classes and one focused on supporting students as they transitioned from developmental into credit-bearing classes. One learning community linked developmental reading and developmental English; another linked developmental reading and developmental math. The transitional learning community targeted students in their first semester after completing developmental education requirements. These students enrolled in a one-hour study skills course, linked with college-level writing and psychology. Achieving the Dream funding played a major role in paying for faculty release time to develop joint curricula for these classes and for supported staff training on learning communities at two conferences. The college planned to build on this infrastructure to offer additional learning communities in fall 2006.

#### **Professional Development**

Twenty-two Round 1 colleges reported allocating Achieving the Dream funds to professional development activities. These activities are taking many forms, with colleges addressing training and staff development needs specific to their campus circumstances. For example, several colleges engaged speakers or hosted discussions (termed “courageous conversations”) around issues of race, ethnicity, and poverty, with the goal of increasing sensitivity to the particular circumstances, challenges, and opportunities of working with specific groups in their student body.

Colleges target their professional development efforts to particular groups of faculty — for instance, sending instructors in learning communities to conferences or for additional training or offering training to instructors interested in becoming faculty advisers, as part of a broader effort to improve student services. One college implemented a system for allocating paid time to faculty each month to devote to professional development activities of their choosing, such as attending lectures and reading professional journals. Several colleges used Achieving the Dream funds to engage consultants or speakers to present on various topics, as a way to appeal to a wide range of faculty and staff and to address potentially difficult topics, such as diversity and cultural sensitivity. Others expanded access to existing on-campus training resources, creating resource banks for faculty or offering a diverse menu of trainings and workshops in each semester. Finally, representatives from several colleges visited peer campuses that were implementing similar initiatives or serving similar student populations or invited staff

from other colleges to provide technical assistance about how they could implement particular interventions on their campuses.

#### **Profile A: Engaging faculty in student advising**

One college is restructuring the delivery of student services and advising based on findings from the college's Community College Survey of Student Engagement data. As part of these efforts, the college developed a Faculty/Staff Advising Training Program to support the core advising/counseling staff. Modeled after the National Academic Advising Association workshops, the training series includes eight workshops, plus two hours of mentoring with a full-time academic adviser. Faculty and staff possessing a bachelor's degree are eligible to participate, and the college has successfully recruited a diverse range of instructors and staff from various departments across campus. Once training is complete, trainees carry a small caseload of student advisees. As of spring 2006, the college had certified 110 faculty and staff advisers, with plans to train an additional 75 in the fall semester.

#### **Profile B: Engaging and training adjunct faculty**

In an effort to engage adjunct faculty, one college has undertaken a concerted effort to develop professional development trainings focused exclusively on adjunct faculty. Trainings include course syllabi preparation, test construction, grading, and the use of Blackboard, the software used by many instructors. The college has also hosted workshops featuring outside speakers addressing a range of issues, including multiculturalism and peer tutoring.

#### **Profile C: Diversity training**

One college sought to address a range of diversity challenges on their campus — including race, gender, and age — with a particularly challenging gap between the cultural values held by a new generation of students and their older instructors. Staff designed a "Welcome Back" event for faculty that addressed campus diversity issues, featuring an outside speaker followed by a discussion facilitated by trained faculty leaders. Workgroups created diversity mission statements, which have been incorporated into the college's mission statements. The college's diversity coordinator is following up this event with a survey of 700 students, as well as focus groups, to identify areas for additional training and discussion.

## **Conclusion**

By spring 2006, Round 1 colleges had clearly made progress in implementing strategies to help improve student outcomes. However, most colleges are still in the formative stages of Achieving the Dream implementation, with much still to be done to figure out operational details, bring efforts to scale, and to reach intended target populations. Strategies that reach a large

portion of the student population appear to be the exception rather than the rule. Additionally, most colleges could benefit from efforts to link implementation plans more closely to data analysis, both in selecting and designing their initiatives and in developing plans for evaluation, so that colleges can assess the results of their efforts.

It is not surprising that most colleges are still in the early phases of establishing their initiatives and evaluation plans, given the ambitious nature of their implementation plans and the fact that many colleges have been focused in their first year on launching long-term processes for institutional transformation and strategic planning — sometimes at the expense of actually implementing ambitious strategies like learning communities. Positive strides appeared to be in evidence at many colleges, however, and all colleges demonstrated some degree of progress toward their implementation goals as of spring 2006. Some colleges appeared to use early semesters as an opportunity to pilot their initiatives — not always with fully formulated plans for implementation or program evaluation — but, nonetheless, most colleges were able to achieve some progress during the course of the first year.



## Chapter 6

# Steps Toward Institutionalizing a Culture of Evidence

## Introduction

In joining Achieving the Dream, colleges commit to transforming their operations through the use of data on students to guide decisions at all levels in the institution. One of the key indicators of progress outlined in the *Integrated Action Plan* (IAP), the blueprint for the initiative developed by the Achieving the Dream partner organizations, is the expectation that colleges “will make significant and continuing changes in policies, budgetary and organizational structures, programs, and services to improve student outcomes.”<sup>1</sup>

With its focus on systemic institutional change, Achieving the Dream differs from most grant-funded initiatives. Most of the participating colleges have received grants from federal programs, such as Title III, Title V, and TRIO, and from other sources to undertake projects to improve outcomes for disadvantaged students. Yet, too often, such projects benefit a relatively small number of students and disappear when the funding ends. Achieving the Dream seeks to help colleges change the way they plan, operate, and evaluate their core programs and services to improve outcomes for most of their students, not just a few, and to ensure that the improvement process is sustained.

To examine whether and to what extent colleges are beginning to institutionalize Achieving the Dream principles and practices, the evaluation team asked the following questions:

1. Are the colleges focusing as much on the process of using data for decision-making as they are on specific strategies for improving student outcomes?
2. Are the colleges reorganizing their governance structures to foster broad engagement by faculty, staff, and others in the process of using data and research to improve student outcomes?
3. Are the colleges infusing data-driven decision-making into their approaches to program review, strategic planning, and budgeting?

Previous chapters touch on each of these questions. This chapter summarizes the evaluation team’s findings on each question, with the caveat that the work at the colleges is still evolving, meaning that it is too early to make definitive conclusions about how far the colleges are likely to move toward transforming themselves according to the Achieving the Dream

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<sup>1</sup>MDC, Inc. (2006b), p. 6.

model. At the time of the evaluation team's site visits in spring 2006, six of the 27 Round 1 colleges had begun to use evidence of student outcomes as the basis for academic program evaluation, strategic planning, and budgeting, and thus they were making clear progress toward institutionalizing a "culture of evidence," as defined by Achieving the Dream (see Chapters 1 and 3). Another five colleges had taken the important steps of engaging a substantial number of faculty and staff in the analysis of data on student outcomes and of adopting evidence-based strategic planning procedures. Although all 11 of these colleges had begun movement toward building a college-wide culture of evidence *before* they became involved in Achieving the Dream, the evaluation team's interviews indicated that the initiative was helping to energize and, in some cases, accelerate their efforts in this direction.

Of the remaining 16 colleges, 10 had in place some of the building blocks of a culture of evidence, although for various reasons they had yet to pull them together and institute other key policies and practices. For example, three of these colleges actually had well developed institutional research capabilities and had even adopted data-driven approaches to strategic planning. However, none of the three had engaged a broad segment of faculty and staff in using data on student outcomes to improve programs and services. Others were hampered by difficulties retrieving and analyzing data or by turnover of key project or college leadership. The other six colleges, all of which have limited data collection and analysis capabilities, had not figured out how to begin using data to evaluate and improve programs and services.

Interviewees at half the Round 1 colleges indicated that recent developments in state policy have encouraged them to focus more on student outcomes and to adopt principles and practices such as those advocated by Achieving the Dream. In addition, respondents at all but four of the 27 Round 1 colleges mentioned the connection between Achieving the Dream and the increased emphasis by accreditation agencies on using data on student outcomes to guide decision-making at all levels in colleges. Administrators, faculty, and staff at several colleges indicated that participating in Achieving the Dream has helped them respond to these new demands from accreditation agencies.

This chapter describes some of the early efforts and emerging plans of the Round 1 colleges to institutionalize and sustain a culture of evidence. It discusses how colleges reorganized their operations to support Achieving the Dream goals and activities. It concludes by examining evidence of the impact of two key external drivers for institutional transformation — state policy and the accreditation process — on the adoption by the colleges of policies and practices associated with a culture of evidence.

## Progress Toward Institutionalizing a Culture of Evidence

This section examines the extent to which the 27 Round 1 colleges were taking steps to institutionalize a culture of evidence — by developing new processes, by reorganizing their institutions to promote broader engagement in decision-making, and by making evidence the basis for program review, strategic planning, and budgeting.

### Focus on “Best Process” Versus “Best Practice”

In analyzing data on students to design, implement, and evaluate *particular* programmatic interventions or strategies, the participating colleges are modeling a process that they will ideally use to design and improve their programs and services more broadly. From this perspective, colleges improve their performance not by adopting “best practices” *per se* but by following a “best process” that leads to the development of practices effective in serving students.

The evaluation team found that some of the colleges were as focused on the Achieving the Dream process of data-based decision-making as on implementing specific strategies. As indicated in Chapter 3, approximately 13 of the Round 1 colleges were continuing their efforts to analyze data on student outcomes in the second year (the first year for program implementation), while two others that had not begun the process in the first year did so in Year 2. The other colleges stopped analyzing data after the planning year to focus on implementing their strategies, or, in the case of a few colleges, never really got started with analyzing data. At most of the colleges that had stopped analyzing data, the work of Achieving the Dream was geared toward developing and implementing particular programmatic interventions, not on bringing about systemic changes that could benefit students on a larger scale.

Many of the colleges need additional guidance on how to design program evaluations of their efforts to improve student outcomes. As discussed in Chapter 3, only about one-fourth of the colleges had formal plans for evaluating their Achieving the Dream strategies; in some cases, even these plans raised methodological questions. Without the capacity to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions, colleges will likely struggle to implement the Achieving the Dream process of using data to improve the impact of programs and services.

As described in Chapter 5, most of the efforts to implement strategies across the Round 1 colleges are small in scale so far. At the time of the evaluation team’s visits, fewer than a third of the colleges had begun to seriously discuss how to bring to scale the interventions they are piloting as part of Achieving the Dream. Some colleges that were focused on data-driven decision-making seemed to pay closer attention to how their strategies would be funded and sustained after support from Achieving the Dream ends. For example, a math instructor at one such college said:

Well, the things that we're always thinking about are "Is this a good idea?" and "Will the college be able to sustain it?" because we don't want to get things going and then fade away. So I think that's a challenge — always needing to answer those questions right up front. We talk about that with the supplemental learning [program] very specifically: "Where does this money come from so that it's always there?" And I think that's a good discipline. People understand that this is not an initiative; it's a cultural change, and maybe that's the reason it's so challenging.

Several of the colleges were using other grants, such as Title III or Title V, to fund the implementation of Achieving the Dream strategies. While this approach represents a positive leveraging of non-Achieving the Dream funds to reach similar objectives, it still runs the risk of not being sustainable. Several developmental education instructors at one college discussed how the college had tried one of its Achieving the Dream strategies — learning communities — in the past. While the learning communities were considered effective in increasing student success, the program was discontinued after the department no longer had the funding to reassign time for instruction. Another college expressed uncertainty about where the funds will come from to expand the supplemental instruction program the college is piloting as part of Achieving the Dream.

For most of the colleges, the amount of financial resources provided by Achieving the Dream was modest in comparison to other grants they have received and to their overall operating budgets. Several colleges indicated that while they appreciated the financial support from Lumina Foundation for Education, much more important was the initiative's vision for improving student outcomes and the approach of using data to bring about improvements. One college president said simply: "It is in our DNA. If they called today and told us we would not get any more money, we would still continue our efforts." At this college, Achieving the Dream was viewed primarily as a process for using data and research to determine how best to spend existing college resources, rather than as a method to support the development of new programs. The evaluation team hypothesizes that colleges such as this one will be more likely to institutionalize the Achieving the Dream approach.

### **Reorganizing to Promote Broad Engagement**

The extent to which colleges integrate Achieving the Dream functions into their governance structures will likely have important effect on whether the initiative is institutionalized and sustained. Achieving the Dream core and data teams — the on-campus groups tasked with managing the initiative — were used by most colleges to organize activities and encourage widespread faculty and staff buy-in. Several colleges reorganized college operations to support Achieving the Dream goals and activities. Seven colleges created a new committee structure to

support the initiative, and several others integrated Achieving the Dream efforts into existing college councils or committees.

Reorganizing college governance structures to facilitate the work of Achieving the Dream can serve as a signal to faculty and staff that the initiative is a college priority. An administrator responsible for overseeing Achieving the Dream said:

In order for this initiative to become part of what we do in our culture and not to be considered a peripheral add-on, we needed to approach it through the regular structure of accreditation, process improvement, and strategic planning at [the college]. So from the very beginning we incorporated it with our planning process and accreditation efforts . . . it was truly set up to create institutional change, and it has gone far beyond our expectations.

Reorganizing college governance structures can also help engage a broader group of faculty and staff in the process of using data to improve student outcomes. For example, one college merged its data and core team functions into an existing student success, retention, and placement committee. This committee — co-chaired by the vice president for academic affairs and student services and the president of the faculty union — includes approximately 20 administrators, faculty, and staff from across the college’s campuses. Another college created a developmental program faculty team as part of its Achieving the Dream strategies. This 27-member committee, which includes all faculty who teach a developmental education course, led to a noticeable increase in communication between full- and part-time developmental faculty and with other departments as well.

What effect reorganizing a college’s committee structure has on overall progress toward institutionalizing a culture of evidence will be an important line of inquiry in future research on the Round 1 colleges.

### **Making Evidence the Basis for Program Review, Strategic Planning, and Budgeting**

About half the Round 1 colleges had adopted or were in the process of adopting strategic planning procedures that rely on data for measuring progress toward goals. About half of these colleges had also implemented data-intensive program review procedures through which they evaluate programs based on outcomes as well as enrollments. At least one of these colleges embedded the Achieving the Dream objectives and performance measures into its two-year program review cycle. The institutional research director at this college argued that her college’s decision to link Achieving the Dream to the college’s program review process will help to sustain the initiative:

[Achieving the Dream] is now embedded. It is a hallmark of dedication to student learning and a focus on students. . . [E]very other year its objectives are assessed, and they are reported out to college leadership and they are reported out to our public as to whether or not the objectives are achieved. That's bold and that's marvelous, because now [Achieving the Dream] is in a college accountability process and cycle. There's regularity to it, and people can look to it to be accountable. That places it on a much higher level than many other programs. That is significant.

Perhaps the ultimate indicator of whether a college has truly adopted the Achieving the Dream approach is whether it allocates resources based on evidence of what works. The chair of a reaccreditation committee at one college supported this point, saying: "If it isn't related to the budget, then at the end of the day, no one cares." Most of the colleges that were implementing evidence-based program review processes seemed also to be moving toward allocating resources based on evidence of effectiveness. However, only two or three of the colleges had fully implemented such a system.

At the time of the evaluation team's site visits in spring 2006, six of the 27 Round 1 colleges had adopted an evidence-based approach to strategic planning and were using evidence as the basis for academic program review, although perhaps only one was systematically evaluating the effectiveness of student services. All six were also moving toward making budget decisions based on evidence of program effectiveness, and two had actually started doing so. Thus, these six colleges were making clear progress toward institutionalizing a culture of evidence. Another five colleges were beginning to take steps toward institutionalizing a culture of evidence in that they were engaging a substantial number of faculty and staff in the analysis of data on student outcomes and had adopted, or were in the process of adopting, evidence-based strategic planning procedures.

It is important to note that, with one possible exception, the six leading colleges and the other five colleges taking preliminary steps toward institutionalization were already moving in this direction before they became involved with Achieving the Dream. Nevertheless, the evaluation team's interviews at all 11 of these colleges indicated that Achieving the Dream was helping each further its efforts to build a college-wide culture of evidence, usually by providing the impetus for focusing on — and in some cases accelerating — existing efforts in this direction.

Of the remaining 16 colleges, 10 had in place some of the key building blocks of a culture of evidence. Most of these colleges had analyzed data to identify gaps in student achievement, although the connection between their analysis and the strategies being implemented was not always clear. Some of them were hampered by difficulties retrieving and analyzing data or by turnover of key project or college leadership. For example, some faculty and staff at one col-

lege had been collecting and analyzing data on students to fulfill state reporting requirements and to prepare for accreditation visits. However, these efforts were inconsistent across departments, and progress toward building a culture of evidence stalled over the past couple of years due to major difficulties implementing a new student information and data warehouse (that would permit longitudinal tracking). Another college was slow to start analyzing data, although it had recently begun to do so. Three colleges actually had well-developed institutional research capabilities and had even adopted data-driven approaches to strategic planning. However, these three colleges had not yet engaged a broad segment of their faculty and staff in analyzing data on student outcomes and devising ways to address the problems revealed through such analysis.

The other six colleges, all of which have limited data collection and analysis capabilities, had not figured out how to begin using the data they do collect to evaluate and improve programs and services. Future research will reveal whether these colleges can overcome these limitations and begin to build a culture of evidence with the assistance of their Achieving the Dream coaches and data facilitators.

## **External Incentives for Institutional Transformation**

At many of the Round 1 colleges, Achieving the Dream has already created a noticeable shift in attitudes among at least some people on campus toward using data to improve student outcomes. But why now? Like community colleges across the country, these schools have been struggling with low retention and graduation rates for years. What is it about Achieving the Dream that is making a difference? Part of the explanation seems to be that Achieving the Dream focuses attention on one priority that everyone can agree on: student success. Of course, colleges also respond to incentives from outside sources. This section examines the extent to which state policy and accreditation have encouraged the Round 1 colleges to focus on outcomes for disadvantaged students and to build a culture of evidence.

### **State Policy Incentives**

State policies and regulations shape and constrain the efforts of community colleges to improve student outcomes, so part of the overall Achieving the Dream initiative is dedicated to advocating for policies that contribute to student achievement. Interviewees at half the colleges indicated that recent developments in state policy have encouraged them to focus more on student outcomes and to adopt principles and practices consistent with Achieving the Dream.

In the Virginia Community Colleges System's (VCCS) strategic plan, *Dateline 2009: A Strategic Direction*, one strategy for meeting the system's goals for graduation, retention, and job placement includes an explicit reference to the initiative:<sup>2</sup>

Through "Achieving the Dream" (Lumina Foundation project research under way at several VCCS colleges), the VCCS will provide information to all 23 colleges to better respond to underserved student populations; and evaluate these data to make appropriate revisions to VCCS Policy as necessary.

As the institutional research director from one Virginia college pointed out, the state's strategic plan will require colleges to track the progress of underserved students more carefully. According to this person, Achieving the Dream was well timed to provide guidance and support to colleges to meet VCCS goals.

Reporting requirements and initiatives in other states also reinforced Achieving the Dream goals. A college president in Florida said:

We look very carefully at how our students do — particularly low-income and minority students — that's something which started at the state level, long before Achieving the Dream. We have to report to the state on an annual basis how our minority students are doing and what strategies we are putting in place [to improve their outcomes]. [We are also required to report] gaps in achievement and graduation and job placement rates. Our one goal from a state perspective is to be sure to close those gaps.

Interviewees at more than one college in Texas mentioned the synergy between the goals of Achieving the Dream and those of the state's "Closing the Gaps" initiative, which seeks to address growing inequities in postsecondary access and attainment among the state's growing Latino population. At another Texas college, several interviewees mentioned that the state's decision to no longer reimburse colleges in cases where students take the same course more than two times has increased pressure on colleges to improve course completion and retention rates.

States can also explicitly encourage and support colleges to strengthen their analysis and use of data. Florida, with its K-20 Education Data Warehouse, is a national leader in this regard. As the president of one Florida college said: "I have to give kudos to Florida [Department of Education] for the database that has been created for the education sector. You call them and want information, and you get it just like that." In addition to providing access to data, the Florida Department of Education's Division of Community Colleges and Workforce Education conducts studies, including some that track cohorts of students. In one such study, the department found that

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<sup>2</sup>Virginia Community Colleges System (2005).

students who take a student success course — that is, a course that teaches study skills, note-taking, and time management and other skills — are more likely to be retained and graduate or transfer than are students who do not.<sup>3</sup> Other colleges in the state are now considering requiring students to take student success courses, particularly those students who are in developmental programs. Such studies not only generate findings useful in informing practice but also provide models for analyses that colleges can conduct themselves in greater depth with their own data.

However, college personnel also said that state policy can sometimes hinder efforts to increase student success. Some developmental faculty in Florida criticized their state's mandatory college placement test, arguing that it does not give colleges sufficient flexibility, resulting in students' being incorrectly placed. A developmental faculty member at one Florida college said: "Prior to that test we used to be able to move students out of [developmental] reading all together. They came in, and we tested them, and they placed into college-level reading. The state won't allow us to do that anymore." State efforts to improve information systems has also caused frustration at some colleges. Several North Carolina colleges were concerned about the amount of time and money they have spent implementing a new statewide information system, which has distracted them from Achieving the Dream.

### **Accreditation**

The evaluation team found that Achieving the Dream's emphasis on a culture of evidence was reinforced by the reaccreditation processes that community colleges undergo. The 27 Round 1 colleges were at different stages of their reaccreditation processes; some had been recently reaccredited, and others were preparing for an accreditation visit. All but four of the Round 1 colleges mentioned the connection between Achieving the Dream and the increased emphasis by accreditation agencies on using data on student outcomes to guide decision-making. Several indicated that participating in Achieving the Dream has helped them respond to these new demands from the accrediting agencies. For example, the president of one college said:

[Achieving the Dream] has enabled us to enhance our SACS [Southern Association of Colleges and Schools] reaffirmation process. We have also focused on the fact that [Achieving the Dream] targets low-income and students of color, but everyone benefits from this process. Both SACS and Lumina have put a heavy emphasis on data. Pulling data for [Achieving the Dream] has helped us considerably with SACS and the data they require us to track. I am not sure we would have been quite as sensitive with the data without [Achieving the Dream].

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<sup>3</sup>Florida Department of Education (2006).

At least two Round 1 colleges were criticized by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) for lacking the systems to support data-based improvement. As part of the SACS reaccreditation process, colleges are asked to design and submit a “quality enhancement plan” (QEP) for a college-wide initiative to improve student learning. In 2004, SACS rejected the QEP submitted by one of these colleges, putting it on probation until it submitted a new QEP focused on improving student learning outcomes. According to the college’s president, SACS was “concerned with student outcomes and making decisions based on data and documenting what you were doing, so we knew we had to improve the institutional effectiveness process, and we knew we needed more data on outcomes.” The president said that Achieving the Dream came along at an ideal time because it provided resources and guidance for the college on how to strengthen its institutional research capacity and it helped to build support among the faculty for measuring student learning and setting goals for improvement.

The second college received a critical report from SACS based on a fall 2005 visit that cited the need for stronger institutional effectiveness policies to promote decision-making based on evidence of student success. SACS required the college to submit a plan by mid-spring 2006 addressing the review committee’s concerns. Until that point, the college’s Achieving the Dream efforts had been unfocused. The critical SACS report enabled the administration to rally the faculty and staff to form task forces assigned to follow the Achieving the Dream process to meet the SACS committee’s demands. Thus, SACS motivated the college to move more rapidly to implement Achieving the Dream.

College personnel at several other colleges were confident that Achieving the Dream will help them prepare for reaccreditation. They pointed out that the initiative’s focus on institutional research and a culture of evidence was well-aligned with SACS’s institutional effectiveness standards and with the Higher Learning Commission’s “Academic Quality Improvement Program.” Colleges at various stages of the accreditation process indicated that Achieving the Dream will help them meet SACS standards for assessment of learning and institutional effectiveness.

Faculty and staff at several colleges could not clearly distinguish Achieving the Dream activities from their reaccreditation efforts. This does not mean that these colleges were failing to institutionalize Achieving the Dream principles. In fact, future research on the Round 1 colleges may reveal that combining Achieving the Dream and reaccreditation efforts may be a vehicle for institutionalizing and sustaining the initiative.

In some cases, accreditation, state policy, and Achieving the Dream were having a mutually reinforcing effect in promoting the development of a culture of evidence. The institutional research director at a Virginia college said that data analysis was not a priority prior to the college’s involvement with Achieving the Dream. However, the college’s upcoming SACS reaccreditation, the Virginia Community Colleges System’s new student retention and graduation

goals, and Achieving the Dream have together catalyzed increased use of data to improve student outcomes. A campus dean at another college referred to three major initiatives on campus — Achieving the Dream, development of a quality enhancement plan for SACS, and a First-Year Experience effort being funded by Title III — as a “perfect storm” that has resulted in a shift in college culture toward data collection and analysis. This person said that the three initiatives together “focus so much on assessment that suddenly we look at our programs in a different way.”

The evaluation team found that the reaccreditation process has generated interest among the Round 1 colleges in Achieving the Dream and its concept of the culture of evidence. Future research on these colleges will indicate whether this enthusiasm is sustained or whether administrators, faculty, and staff lose interest in using data for decision-making once colleges secure accreditation. The results will likely depend on whether their efforts to promote broad-based inquiry and use of evidence, building on the initial work described in this report, actually lead to substantial improvements in student success.



## **Appendix A**

### **Supplementary Tables for Chapter 2: Characteristics of Round 1 Colleges, Academic Year 2004-2005**

## Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count

**Appendix Table A.1**

### Characteristics of Round 1 Colleges in Florida, Academic Year 2004-2005

	Broward Community College	Hillsborough Community College	Tallahassee Community College	Valencia Community College
Location	Fort Lauderdale	Tampa	Tallahassee	Orlando
Degree of urbanization	Midsize city	Large city	Midsize city	Midsize city
Published in-district tuition and fees (\$)	1,755	1,833	1,424	1,800
<b><u>Fall 2004 enrollment</u></b>				
Full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment	17,784	12,043	8,486	17,864
Total enrollment	32,948	22,123	12,775	29,556
Full-time students (%)	30.7	31.4	49.5	40.4
Part-time students (%)	69.3	68.6	50.5	59.6
Male (%)	37.5	40.8	44.8	42.5
Female (%)	62.5	59.2	55.2	57.5
Foreign/nonresident (%)	9.0	1.8	0.9	2.3
Black, non-Hispanic (%)	27.7	18.3	32.1	14.7
American Indian or Alaska Native (%)	0.2	0.5	0.5	0.5
Asian or Pacific Islander (%)	3.3	3.6	1.6	5.3
Hispanic (%)	21.9	19.3	5.3	21.1
White, non-Hispanic (%)	33.8	56.2	57.2	50.5
Race/ethnicity unknown (%)	4.2	0.4	2.3	5.8
Under age 25 <sup>a</sup> (%)	57.7	61.1	73.9	68.5

(continued)

**Appendix Table A.1 (continued)**

	Broward Community College	Hillsborough Community College	Tallahassee Community College	Valencia Community College
<b><u>Faculty<sup>b</sup></u></b>				
Total faculty	1,394	1,505	555	1,174
Full-time faculty (%)	23.7	15.7	28.1	27.0
Part-time faculty (%)	76.3	84.3	71.9	73.0
Male (%)	52.2	56.9	52.8	49.6
Female (%)	47.8	43.1	47.2	50.4
Foreign/nonresident (%)	1.2	0.0	0.2	0.9
Black, non-Hispanic (%)	11.9	8.0	19.6	7.9
American Indian or Alaska Native (%)	0.4	0.4	0.0	0.7
Asian or Pacific Islander (%)	2.4	2.0	0.4	2.6
Hispanic (%)	9.3	8.6	2.5	7.6
White, non-Hispanic (%)	74.9	81.1	77.3	70.6
Race/ethnicity unknown (%)	0.0	0.0	0.0	9.8
Full-time equivalent student-to-faculty ratio	13:1	8:1	15:1	15:1
<b><u>Financial aid<sup>c</sup></u></b>				
Any financial aid received <sup>d</sup> (%)	55.9	55.5	51.1	66.5
Federal grant aid received (%)	44.3	41.4	25.0	42.5
State grant aid received (%)	34.9	19.7	7.8	43.5
Institutional grant aid received (%)	17.8	7.2	1.3	9.3
Student loan aid received (%)	13.0	16.7	17.4	15.1
Average federal grant aid (\$)	2,893	2,918	1,200	2,993
Average state grant aid (\$)	1,106	1,115	676	1,137
Average institutional grant aid (\$)	982	1,101	218	1,389
Average student loan aid (\$)	2,330	2,311	1,475	3,242

(continued)

**Appendix Table A.1 (continued)**

	Broward Community College	Hillsborough Community College	Tallahassee Community College	Valencia Community College
<b><u>Institutional finances<sup>c</sup></u></b>				
Total revenues (\$)	168,039,234	112,828,353	83,581,938	142,574,822
Total expenditures <sup>f</sup> (\$)	154,511,057	95,384,658	86,424,399	140,440,063
<b><u>Completions, 2003</u></b>				
Awarded an associate's degree or certificate	4,908	3,235	2,110	6,239
Graduation rate <sup>g</sup> (%)	22.5	26.5	29.7	33.7
Transfer-out rate <sup>h</sup> (%)	16.4	12.2	18.1	12.4

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SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).

NOTES: NA = not available. Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in sums and differences.

<sup>a</sup>Age distribution was incomplete for data year 2004-2005. Consequently, age data refer to 2003-2004 enrollments.

Data for students whose ages were unknown were omitted from this calculation.

<sup>b</sup>Faculty data were incomplete for data year 2004-2005. All data refer to data year 2003-2004.

<sup>c</sup>Financial aid data refer to full-time, first-time degree/certificate-seeking undergraduate students for the 2003-2004 academic year.

<sup>d</sup>"Any financial aid" includes grants, loans, assistantships, scholarships, fellowships, tuition waivers, tuition discounts, veterans' benefits, employer aid (tuition reimbursement), and other monies (other than from relatives/friends) provided to students to meet expenses.

<sup>e</sup>Data calculated from Fiscal Year 2004 data. GASB reporting standards were used for each depicted institution.

<sup>f</sup>Revenues and expenses do not match due to yearly budget changes.

<sup>g</sup>Graduation rates are for cohort year 2001. Graduation rates are determined by completers within 150 percent of the normal time to complete a degree.

<sup>h</sup>Transfer-out rates are for cohort year 2001. Transfer-out rates are determined by students known to have transferred to another postsecondary institution within 150 percent of the normal time to complete a degree.

## Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count

**Appendix Table A.2**

### Characteristics of Round 1 Colleges in New Mexico, Academic Year 2004-2005

	Central New Mexico Community College	New Mexico State University- Doña Ana	San Juan College	Santa Fe Community College	Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute	University of New Mexico- Gallup
Location	Albuquerque	Las Cruces	Farmington	Santa Fe	Albuquerque	Gallup
Degree of urbanization	Large city	Midsize city	Large town	Midsize city	Large city	Small town
Published in-district tuition and fees (\$)	1,476	1,008	600	1,005	150	1,104
<b><u>Fall 2004 enrollment</u></b>						
Full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment	12,276	3,328	3,525	1,915	658	1,749
Total enrollment	22,927	6,083	5,224	3,897	772	3,056
Full-time students (%)	30.1	31.8	51.1	23.4	77.7	35.6
Part-time students (%)	69.9	68.2	48.9	76.6	22.3	64.4
Male (%)	40.1	43.6	40.9	37.2	43.1	34.1
Female (%)	59.9	56.4	59.1	62.8	56.9	65.9
Foreign/nonresident (%)	0.2	0.9	0.5	0.3	0.0	0.2
Black, non-Hispanic (%)	3.0	2.1	0.5	1.2	0.0	0.5
American Indian or Alaska Native (%)	7.0	2.3	30.1	3.3	100.0	80.0
Asian or Pacific Islander (%)	2.3	0.9	0.7	1.5	0.0	0.4
Hispanic (%)	41.2	63.9	11.5	40.8	0.0	8.8
White, non-Hispanic (%)	39.2	19.1	56.0	48.1	0.0	8.9
Race/ethnicity unknown (%)	7.1	10.9	0.7	4.8	0.0	1.1
Under age 25 <sup>a</sup> (%)	45.0	60.0	44.3	36.4	55.7	46.3

(continued)

Appendix Table A.2 (continued)

	Central New Mexico Community College	New Mexico State University- Doña Ana	San Juan College	Santa Fe Community College	Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute	University of New Mexico- Gallup
<b><u>Faculty<sup>b</sup></u></b>						
Total faculty	1,018	94	327	303	30	149
Full-time faculty (%)	31.8	98.9	30.9	18.5	100.0	43.0
Part-time faculty (%)	68.2	1.1	69.1	81.5	0.0	57.0
Male (%)	47.3	45.7	46.8	45.2	66.7	45.0
Female (%)	52.7	54.3	53.2	54.8	33.3	55.0
Foreign/nonresident (%)	0.0	2.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.7
Black, non-Hispanic (%)	1.8	0.0	0.9	1.0	3.3	2.7
American Indian or Alaska Native (%)	1.2	0.0	2.4	0.0	46.7	19.5
Asian or Pacific Islander (%)	2.1	3.2	0.0	0.3	0.0	2.7
Hispanic (%)	14.3	26.6	7.0	12.9	10.0	9.4
White, non-Hispanic (%)	75.0	68.1	80.4	63.7	40.0	61.7
Race/ethnicity unknown (%)	5.6	0.0	9.2	22.1	0.0	3.4
Full-time equivalent student-to-faculty ratio	12:1	35:1	11:1	6:1	22:1	12:1
<b><u>Financial aid<sup>c</sup></u></b>						
Any financial aid received <sup>d</sup> (%)	76.0	81.7	61.5	91.4	35.3	87.7
Federal grant aid received (%)	46.8	67.2	31.6	63.6	35.3	71.4
State grant aid received (%)	48.3	47.9	25.4	78.6	19.9	44.0
Institutional grant aid received (%)	2.8	3.2	7.1	36.4	5.6	0.4
Student loan aid received (%)	18.8	37.2	8.6	10.7	0.0	24.2
Average federal grant aid (\$)	2,482	3,139	2,131	3,500	1,270	3,329
Average state grant aid (\$)	512	809	647	400	478	719
Average institutional grant aid (\$)	295	1,571	537	300	400	473
Average student loan aid (\$)	3,774	3,743	5,441	2,625	NA	3,132

(continued)

**Appendix Table A.2 (continued)**

	Central New Mexico Community College	New Mexico State University- Doña Ana	San Juan College	Santa Fe Community College	Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute	University of New Mexico- Gallup
<b><u>Institutional finances<sup>e</sup></u></b>						
Total revenues (\$)	109,257,559	29,225,486	56,824,661	37,918,942	11,737,907	14,228,069
Total expenditures <sup>f</sup> (\$)	104,437,932	29,348,211	56,599,981	33,551,192	11,737,907	14,527,069
<b><u>Completions, 2003</u></b>						
Awarded an associate's degree or certificate	1,841	424	653	185	91	183
Graduation rate <sup>g</sup> (%)	7.5	9.4	14.2	7.6	20.0	9.5
Transfer-out rate <sup>h</sup> (%)	11.0	NA	8.5	NA	NA	3.0

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).

NOTES: NA = not available. Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in sums and differences.

<sup>a</sup>Age distribution was incomplete for data year 2004-2005. Consequently, age data refer to 2003-2004 enrollments. Data for students whose ages were unknown were omitted from this calculation.

<sup>b</sup>Faculty data were incomplete for data year 2004-2005. All data refer to data year 2003-2004.

<sup>c</sup>Financial aid data refer to full-time, first-time degree/certificate-seeking undergraduate students for the 2003-2004 academic year.

<sup>d</sup>"Any financial aid" includes grants, loans, assistantships, scholarships, fellowships, tuition waivers, tuition discounts, veterans' benefits, employer aid (tuition reimbursement), and other monies (other than from relatives/friends) provided to students to meet expenses.

<sup>e</sup>Data calculated from Fiscal Year 2004 data. GASB reporting standards were used for each depicted institution.

<sup>f</sup>Revenues and expenses do not match due to yearly budget changes.

<sup>g</sup>Graduation rates are for cohort year 2001. Graduation rates are determined by completers within 150 percent of the normal time to complete a degree.

<sup>h</sup>Transfer-out rates are for cohort year 2001. Transfer-out rates are determined by students known to have transferred to another postsecondary institution within 150 percent of the normal time to complete a degree.

**Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count**

**Appendix Table A.3**

**Characteristics of Round 1 Colleges in North Carolina, Academic Year 2004-2005**

	Durham Technical Community College	Guilford Technical Community College	Martin Community College	Wayne Community College
Location	Durham	Jamestown	Williamston	Goldsboro
Degree of urbanization	Midsize city	Urban fringe of midsize city	Small town	Midsize city
Published in-district tuition and fees (\$)	1,260	1,291	1,254	1,400
<b><u>Fall 2004 enrollment</u></b>				
Full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment	2,857	4,797	615	1,835
Total enrollment	5,534	8,491	927	3,272
Full-time students (%)	27.2	34.5	49.4	33.9
Part-time students (%)	72.8	65.5	50.6	66.1
Male (%)	35.2	43.3	22.5	37.4
Female (%)	64.8	56.7	77.5	62.6
Foreign/nonresident (%)	9.4	1.7	0.0	0.1
Black, non-Hispanic (%)	41.1	34.1	55.9	32.1
American Indian or Alaska Native (%)	0.4	0.5	0.3	0.9
Asian or Pacific Islander (%)	2.5	2.6	0.2	1.8
Hispanic (%)	3.1	2.1	0.2	2.7
White, non-Hispanic (%)	41.8	57.2	42.5	59.9
Race/ethnicity unknown (%)	1.6	1.9	0.9	2.4
Under age 25 <sup>a</sup> (%)	37.5	54.5	53.5	55.3

(continued)

**Appendix Table A.3 (continued)**

	Durham Technical Community College	Guilford Technical Community College	Martin Community College	Wayne Community College
<b><u>Faculty<sup>b</sup></u></b>				
Total faculty	518	807	132	300
Full-time faculty (%)	25.3	29.2	24.2	38.0
Part-time faculty (%)	74.7	70.8	75.8	62.0
Male (%)	40.2	47.0	39.4	42.3
Female (%)	59.8	53.0	60.6	57.7
Foreign/nonresident (%)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Black, non-Hispanic (%)	24.9	19.8	25.0	18.3
American Indian or Alaska Native (%)	0.6	0.4	0.0	0.3
Asian or Pacific Islander (%)	2.7	1.2	0.0	1.7
Hispanic (%)	3.9	2.2	1.5	2.7
White, non-Hispanic (%)	67.8	74.6	73.5	77.0
Race/ethnicity unknown (%)	0.2	1.7	0.0	0.0
Full-time equivalent student-to-faculty ratio	6:1	6:1	5:1	6:1
<b><u>Financial aid<sup>c</sup></u></b>				
Any financial aid received <sup>d</sup> (%)	51.6	50.5	77.9	54.7
Federal grant aid received (%)	50.5	38.0	71.6	47.1
State grant aid received (%)	11.1	7.5	24.2	8.9
Institutional grant aid received (%)	0.3	10.3	6.3	3.8
Student loan aid received (%)	1.7	11.7	32.6	4.2
Average federal grant aid (\$)	1,700	1,350	3,039	2,836
Average state grant aid (\$)	500	1,015	808	647
Average institutional grant aid (\$)	626	573	344	699
Average student loan aid (\$)	450	3,564	4,252	1,791

(continued)

**Appendix Table A.3 (continued)**

	Durham Technical Community College	Guilford Technical Community College	Martin Community College	Wayne Community College
<b><u>Institutional finances<sup>e</sup></u></b>				
Total revenues (\$)	31,321,859	67,262,186	9,618,180	27,546,942
Total expenditures <sup>f</sup> (\$)	26,917,105	51,310,998	9,701,060	25,012,760
<b><u>Completions, 2003</u></b>				
Awarded an associate's degree or certificate	458	890	111	483
Graduation rate <sup>g</sup> (%)	6.7	14.8	17.8	20.6
Transfer-out rate <sup>h</sup> (%)	NA	NA	NA	27.9

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).

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NOTES: NA = not available. Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in sums and differences.

<sup>a</sup>Age distribution was incomplete for data year 2004-2005. Consequently, age data refer to 2003-2004 enrollments. Data for students whose ages were unknown were omitted from this calculation.

<sup>b</sup>Faculty data were incomplete for data year 2004-2005. All data refer to data year 2003-2004.

<sup>c</sup>Financial aid data refer to full-time, first-time degree/certificate-seeking undergraduate students for the 2003-2004 academic year.

<sup>d</sup>"Any financial aid" includes grants, loans, assistantships, scholarships, fellowships, tuition waivers, tuition discounts, veterans' benefits, employer aid (tuition reimbursement), and other monies (other than from relatives/friends) provided to students to meet expenses.

<sup>e</sup>Data calculated from Fiscal Year 2004 data. GASB reporting standards were used for each depicted institution.

<sup>f</sup>Revenues and expenses do not match due to yearly budget changes.

<sup>g</sup>Graduation rates are for cohort year 2001. Graduation rates are determined by completers within 150 percent of the normal time to complete a degree.

<sup>h</sup>Transfer-out rates are for cohort year 2001. Transfer-out rates are determined by students known to have transferred to another postsecondary institution within 150 percent of the normal time to complete a degree.

## Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count

**Appendix Table A.4**

**Characteristics of Round 1 Colleges in Texas, Academic Year 2004-2005**

	Alamo Community College District						Coastal Bend College
	Northwest Vista College	Palo Alto College	San Antonio College	St. Philips College	Brookhaven College		
Location	San Antonio	San Antonio	San Antonio	San Antonio	Farmers Branch	Beeville	
Degree of urbanization	NA	Large city	Large city	Large city	Urban fringe of large city	Small town	
Published in-district tuition and fees (\$)	1,156	1,445	1,445	890	840	1,232	
<b><u>Fall 2004 enrollment</u></b>							
Full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment	4,927	4,625	12,226	6,451	5,586	2,536	
Total enrollment	8,466	7,623	20,563	10,164	10,446	4,013	
Full-time students (%)	37.1	40.8	39.0	45.0	30.0	44.6	
Part-time students (%)	62.9	59.2	61.0	55.0	70.0	55.4	
Male (%)	41.8	34.9	40.3	42.7	41.0	41.4	
Female (%)	58.2	65.1	59.7	57.3	59.0	58.6	
Foreign/nonresident (%)	0.2	0.2	1.3	0.1	2.7	0.3	
Black, non-Hispanic (%)	5.5	1.8	4.7	17.1	12.9	4.8	
American Indian or Alaska Native (%)	0.5	0.3	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.5	
Asian or Pacific Islander (%)	3.2	0.9	2.3	1.9	12.1	0.6	
Hispanic (%)	44.3	63.3	46.7	48.2	21.8	62.2	
White, non-Hispanic (%)	46.2	33.5	44.5	32.1	47.1	30.9	
Race/ethnicity unknown (%)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	2.8	0.7	
Under age 25 <sup>a</sup> (%)	75.1	65.1	59.3	51.8	54.6	60.0	
<b><u>Faculty<sup>b</sup></u></b>							
Total faculty	58	202	591	249	584	187	
Full-time faculty (%)	91.4	68.3	74.6	79.1	19.5	53.5	
Part-Time faculty (%)	8.6	31.7	25.4	20.9	80.5	46.5	

(continued)

**Appendix Table A.4 (continued)**

	Alamo Community College District					
	Northwest Vista College	Palo Alto College	San Antonio College	St. Philips College	Brookhaven College	Coastal Bend College
Male (%)	63.8	54.5	55.7	61.4	45.9	42.2
Female (%)	36.2	45.5	44.3	38.6	54.1	57.8
Foreign/nonresident (%)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Black, non-Hispanic (%)	3.4	5.0	3.9	18.9	8.7	0.5
American Indian or Alaska Native (%)	0.0	0.5	0.5	0.8	0.3	0.0
Asian or Pacific Islander (%)	0.0	2.5	1.7	1.6	5.5	1.6
Hispanic (%)	32.8	28.7	21.7	21.7	6.8	29.4
White, non-Hispanic (%)	60.3	61.9	71.6	57.0	78.4	68.4
Race/ethnicity unknown (%)	3.4	1.5	0.7	0.0	0.2	0.0
Full-time equivalent student-to-faculty ratio	85:1	23:1	21:1	26:1	10:1	14:1
<b><u>Financial aid<sup>c</sup></u></b>						
Any financial aid received <sup>d</sup> (%)	47.7	73.3	61.0	78.1	35.2	71.2
Federal grant aid received (%)	23.9	42.2	28.6	41.3	24.1	64.7
State grant aid received (%)	2.3	4.6	3.7	4.3	11.1	23.2
Institutional grant aid received (%)	12.5	20.8	20.7	17.5	3.6	12.7
Student loan aid received (%)	9.1	5.7	8.1	15.0	10.5	0.0
Average federal grant aid (\$)	3,318	3,458	3,252	3,514	2,854	3,154
Average state grant aid (\$)	1,172	801	804	931	746	1,194
Average institutional grant aid (\$)	723	637	537	634	757	1,158
Average student loan aid (\$)	2,265	2,171	2,343	2,287	1,946	NA
<b><u>Institutional finances<sup>e</sup></u></b>						
Total revenues (\$)	25,430,466	34,899,559	91,223,794	56,177,635	39,259,035	22,567,743
Total expenditures <sup>f</sup> (\$)	25,430,466	34,899,561	91,223,794	56,177,634	39,328,532	21,153,210
<b><u>Completions, 2003</u></b>						
Awarded an associate's degree or certificate	316	509	1,218	1,016	498	720
Graduation rate (%)	10.2	5.8	2.8	10.6	5.9	21.0
Transfer-out rate (%)	34.8	22.5	19.1	14.4	44.6	19.1

(continued)

**Appendix Table A.4 (continued)**

	El Paso Community College	Galveston College	Houston Community College System	South Texas College	Southwest Texas Junior College
Location	El Paso	Galveston	Houston	McAllen	Uvalde
Degree of urbanization	Large city	Midsize city	Large city	Midsize city	Small town
Published in-district tuition and fees (\$)	1,298	1,330	1,176	2,352	1,285
<b><u>Fall 2004 enrollment</u></b>					
Full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment	15,922	1,379	21,454	10,039	3,216
Total enrollment	26,078	2,353	39,715	17,130	5,140
Full-time students (%)	41.4	37.7	30.8	37.7	43.7
Part-time students (%)	58.6	62.3	69.2	62.3	56.3
Male (%)	38.4	35.4	41.6	39.0	39.4
Female (%)	61.6	64.6	58.4	61.0	60.6
Foreign/nonresident (%)	2.6	1.7	7.7	0.8	0.3
Black, non-Hispanic (%)	2.3	19.2	25.0	0.1	1.9
American Indian or Alaska Native (%)	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.0	0.3
Asian or Pacific Islander (%)	0.8	2.6	12.0	0.8	0.4
Hispanic (%)	85.3	22.9	27.0	94.9	80.2
White, non-Hispanic (%)	8.8	53.5	25.0	3.4	16.1
Race/ethnicity unknown (%)	0.0	0.0	3.0	0.0	0.9
Under age 25 <sup>a</sup> (%)	58.5	60.8	49.2	66.7	62.7
<b><u>Faculty<sup>b</sup></u></b>					
Total faculty	1,377	221	2,766	541	216
Full-time faculty (%)	25.4	23.1	26.9	65.6	45.8
Part-time faculty (%)	74.6	76.9	73.1	34.4	54.2
Male (%)	52.7	44.3	53.3	54.7	53.2
Female (%)	47.3	55.7	46.7	45.3	46.8

(continued)

**Appendix Table A.4 (continued)**

	El Paso Community College	Galveston College	Houston Community College System	South Texas College	Southwest Texas Junior College
Foreign/nonresident (%)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Black, non-Hispanic (%)	3.6	14.5	27.5	1.5	0.0
American Indian or Alaska Native (%)	0.3	0.0	0.6	0.6	0.5
Asian or Pacific Islander (%)	2.1	2.7	6.2	5.9	0.9
Hispanic (%)	51.6	13.6	10.7	50.3	46.8
White, non-Hispanic (%)	42.3	69.2	54.2	41.6	51.9
Race/ethnicity unknown (%)	0.0	0.0	0.8	0.2	0.0
Full-time equivalent student-to-faculty ratio	12:1	6:1	8:1	19:1	15:1
<b><u>Financial aid<sup>c</sup></u></b>					
Any financial aid received <sup>d</sup> (%)	78.5	60.0	46.4	88.6	79.3
Federal grant aid received (%)	76.2	37.2	40.0	78.7	73.3
State grant aid received (%)	30.0	15.4	17.9	32.0	11.6
Institutional grant aid received (%)	5.2	7.0	0.0	1.6	9.5
Student loan aid received (%)	0.3	0.4	0.2	3.4	8.6
Average federal grant aid (\$)	3,446	1,842	3,172	3,201	3,193
Average state grant aid (\$)	1,080	653	1,255	1,038	1,188
Average institutional grant aid (\$)	1,078	1,220	NA	1,061	594
Average student loan aid (\$)	1,001	2,000	1,028	564	2,350
<b><u>Institutional finances<sup>e</sup></u></b>					
Total revenues (\$)	134,024,877	17,372,653	251,530,193	111,736,530	28,347,997
Total expenditures <sup>f</sup> (\$)	127,918,223	16,199,729	235,893,027	90,266,187	27,405,775
<b><u>Completions, 2003</u></b>					
Awarded an associate's degree or certificate	1,609	262	2,982	1,415	589
Graduation rate <sup>g</sup> (%)	6.2	7.9	12.1	14.5	18.1
Transfer-out rate <sup>h</sup> (%)	7.6	NA	17.7	9.5	18.7

(continued)

#### **Appendix Table A.4 (continued)**

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).

NOTES: Each campus in the Alamo Community College District reports its data to IPEDS separately. However, for the Achieving the Dream initiative, these colleges are part of the Alamo Community College District and are not considered separate colleges. The district is the recipient of the Achieving the Dream grant.

NA = not available. Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in sums and differences.

<sup>a</sup>Age distribution was incomplete for data year 2004-2005. Consequently, age data refer to 2003-2004 enrollments. Data for students whose ages were unknown were omitted from this calculation.

<sup>b</sup>Faculty data were incomplete for data year 2004-2005. All data refer to data year 2003-2004.

<sup>c</sup>Financial aid data refer to full-time, first-time degree/certificate-seeking undergraduate students for the 2003-2004 academic year.

<sup>d</sup>"Any financial aid" includes grants, loans, assistantships, scholarships, fellowships, tuition waivers, tuition discounts, veterans' benefits, employer aid (tuition reimbursement), and other monies (other than from relatives/friends) provided to students to meet expenses.

<sup>e</sup>Data calculated from Fiscal Year 2004 data. GASB reporting standards were used for each depicted institution.

<sup>f</sup>Revenues and expenses do not match due to yearly budget changes.

<sup>g</sup>Graduation rates are for cohort year 2001. Graduation rates are determined by completers within 150 percent of the normal time to complete a degree.

<sup>h</sup>Transfer-out rates are for cohort year 2001. Transfer-out rates are determined by students known to have transferred to another postsecondary institution within 150 percent of the normal time to complete a degree.

## Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count

**Appendix Table A.5**

### Characteristics of Round 1 Colleges in Virginia, Academic Year 2004-2005

	Danville Community College	Mountain Empire Community College	Patrick Henry Community College	Paul D. Camp Community College	Tidewater Community College
Location	Danville	Big Stone Gap	Martinsville	Franklin	Norfolk
Degree of urbanization	Midsize city	Small town	Small town	Small town	Large city
Published in-district tuition and fees (\$)	2,020	2,095	1,911	1,883	2,166
<b><u>Fall 2004 enrollment</u></b>					
Full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment	2,244	1,785	1,989	722	12,598
Total enrollment	4,060	2,906	3,341	1,468	22,691
Full-time students (%)	32.7	41.9	39.1	23.5	33.0
Part-time students (%)	67.3	58.1	60.9	76.5	67.0
Male (%)	39.0	34.2	35.0	32.6	40.3
Female (%)	61.0	65.8	65.0	67.4	59.7
Foreign/nonresident (%)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2
Black, non-Hispanic (%)	33.7	1.4	23.1	37.2	29.1
American Indian or Alaska Native (%)	0.2	0.1	0.6	0.5	0.6
Asian or Pacific Islander (%)	0.4	0.1	0.5	0.8	5.4
Hispanic (%)	0.4	0.2	0.8	0.7	4.2
White, non-Hispanic (%)	65.3	98.2	74.9	60.8	60.5
Race/ethnicity unknown (%)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Under age 25 <sup>a</sup> (%)	51.8	53.9	44.6	57.8	48.3
<b><u>Faculty<sup>b</sup></u></b>					
Total faculty	200	176	215	97	1,106
Full-time faculty (%)	26.0	27.3	20.0	23.7	24.0
Part-time faculty (%)	74.0	72.7	80.0	76.3	76.0

(continued)

**Appendix Table A.5 (continued)**

	Danville Community College	Mountain Empire Community College	Patrick Henry Community College	Paul D. Camp Community College	Tidewater Community College
Male (%)	92.5	51.7	38.6	42.3	50.1
Female (%)	7.5	48.3	61.4	57.7	49.9
Foreign/nonresident (%)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Black, non-Hispanic (%)	1.0	1.1	2.3	8.2	1.6
American Indian or Alaska Native (%)	0.0	0.6	0.0	0.0	0.0
Asian or Pacific Islander (%)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2
Hispanic (%)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.4
White, non-Hispanic (%)	25.0	25.6	17.7	15.5	21.8
Race/ethnicity unknown (%)	74.0	72.7	80.0	76.3	76.0
Full-time equivalent student-to-faculty ratio	11:1	10:1	9:1	7:1	11:1
<b><u>Financial aid<sup>c</sup></u></b>					
Any financial aid received <sup>d</sup> (%)	64.8	92.1	72.9	68.9	51.1
Federal grant aid received (%)	52.7	79.7	65.5	61.5	37.9
State grant aid received (%)	21.1	75.2	17.5	35.1	27.6
Institutional grant aid received (%)	5.7	14.1	0.0	0.7	1.5
Student loan aid received (%)	4.0	0.0	0.9	0.0	12.8
Average federal grant aid (\$)	2,911	2,716	2,700	2,768	2,999
Average state grant aid (\$)	816	694	1,213	506	559
Average institutional grant aid (\$)	648	715	NA	251	1,107
Average student loan aid (\$)	1,539	NA	789	NA	2,241
<b><u>Institutional finances<sup>e</sup></u></b>					
Total revenues (\$)	19,702,767	17,050,013	15,650,525	9,257,094	91,242,035
Total expenditures <sup>f</sup> (\$)	18,445,949	16,535,260	15,227,060	9,339,108	88,275,054

(continued)

**Appendix Table A.5 (continued)**

	Danville Community College	Mountain Empire Community College	Patrick Henry Community College	Paul D. Camp Community College	Tidewater Community College
<b><u>Completions, 2003</u></b>					
Awarded an associate's degree or certificate	629	315	714	165	1,862
Graduation rate (%)	18.1	12.2	15.1	14.3	9.1
Transfer-out rate (%)	12.5	3.6	3.9	9.2	8.0

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).

NOTES: NA = not available. Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in sums and differences.

<sup>a</sup>Age distribution was incomplete for data year 2004-2005. Consequently, age data refer to 2003-2004 enrollments. Data for students whose ages were unknown were omitted from this calculation.

<sup>b</sup>Faculty data were incomplete for data year 2004-2005. All data refer to data year 2003-2004.

<sup>c</sup>Financial aid data refer to full-time, first-time degree/certificate-seeking undergraduate students for the 2003-2004 academic year.

<sup>d</sup>"Any financial aid" includes grants, loans, assistantships, scholarships, fellowships, tuition waivers, tuition discounts, veterans' benefits, employer aid (tuition reimbursement), and other monies (other than from relatives/friends) provided to students to meet expenses.

<sup>e</sup>Data calculated from Fiscal Year 2004 data. GASB reporting standards were used for each depicted institution.

<sup>f</sup>Revenues and expenses do not match due to yearly budget changes.

<sup>g</sup>Graduation rates are for cohort year 2001. Graduation rates are determined by completers within 150 percent of the normal time to complete a degree.

<sup>h</sup>Transfer-out rates are for cohort year 2001. Transfer-out rates are determined by students known to have transferred to another postsecondary institution within 150 percent of the normal time to complete a degree.

**Appendix B**

**Achieving the Dream**  
**Data Decisions and Definitions of Derived Variables**

As an accompaniment to the tables created for this report, this appendix describes data problems encountered using the Achieving the Dream database, as well as some quality-control checks performed and fixes applied.

## **Summary of Main Issues**

### **Missing Records**

Data were missing for the fall 2002 cohort at Guilford Community College.

### **Referral Data**

There were no math, English, or reading referral data for Central New Mexico Community College and for all Virginia schools. Additionally, there were no math referral data for South Texas College. All students with nonmissing referral data at Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute (SIPI) were referred to some level of remedial instruction in English. After a series of conversations with JBL Associates — the higher education consulting firm that compiled the database — it was determined that there was some issue with data submitted by SIPI. Consequently, all English referral data were recoded to “missing.”

### **Gender**

Of the 2,806 students in the 2002 South Texas College cohort, 1,686 were missing gender values. The remaining 1,120 had values of “1,” defining these students as males. For all but 2 of these 1,686 missing records, values of “0” (for female) were imputed, based on the recommendation of JBL Associates.

### **College Math and English**

At New Mexico State University-Doña Ana, 3,132 records had missing math attempts, 147 records with values of “1” and none with values of “0”; similarly, there were 2,929 records missing English attempts, 350 records with values of “1” and none with values of “0.” At San Juan College, there were similar phenomena in which there were no records in which college math or English attempts were coded as having values of “0.” In all cases, the attempts were recoded to “0,” indicating that students had not attempted these courses. Further, all corresponding completion responses (for example, grade on college-level math) were missing for the records where the attempt variable was initially missing.

## **Completion Variable**

There were inconsistencies in the completion variable for Galveston College in that no students had graduated with any credential in the first three years. The issue, which was brought to the attention of JBL Associates, was likely a data error on the part of the college. As a result, all completion values were recoded to “missing.”

## **Derived Variable Definitions**

### **Completion of Developmental Courses**

The calculations for completion rates for math, English, and reading were performed only on those students who were referred to developmental courses in math, English, and reading, respectively. Excluded were all students at schools for which no referral data was reported; this list includes Central New Mexico Community College, South Texas College (math only), Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute (English only), Danville, Mountain Empire, Patrick Henry, Paul D. Camp, and Tidewater Community Colleges. Further, calculations do not include students missing referral data; if data were missing, researchers did not assume that students were not referred to developmental instruction.

### **Completion of Gatekeeper Courses**

Calculations include students in the 2002 cohort for whom both referral data and grades in gatekeeper courses were nonmissing. This was done to have consistent sample sizes when comparing completion rates of those who were referred to developmental instruction in the respective subject area versus those who were not. “Successful completion” is defined as grade C (2.00) or better.

### **Course Completion Ratios**

This measure takes the ratio of credits completed to credits attempted. In some cases, credits completed may exceed the number of credits attempted; this can occur when students earn credits through other means, such as examination. Overall, this occurred at 10 colleges in 708 cases comprising 664 students. Though it would be useful to disaggregate between developmental and regular credits, the database was not designed to accommodate such an inquiry. The database does allow, however, for variables that indicate whether students passed any of their remedial courses, which would be different than those indicators created in the first section, “Completion of Developmental Courses,” in that the latter only looks at the highest level of remediation.

### **Persistence and Completion Rates**

Calculations include all students in the 2002 cohort. For those tables that show the breakdown by credential or persistence of students, groups are mutually exclusive. For example, if a student were to have received an associate's degree but had also received a certificate, this student would be included only in the "Completed an associate's degree" category. Similarly, if a student were to have received a certificate and was still enrolled, this student would be in the "Completed a certificate or diploma" category.

## **Appendix C**

### **Supplementary Tables for Chapter 5: Strategies Implemented at Round 1 Colleges as of Spring 2006**

**Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count**  
**Appendix Table C.1**  
**Advising Strategies Implemented at Round 1 Colleges as of Spring 2006**

Strategy	College	State	Description	Target/Scale <sup>a</sup>	Implementation Progress <sup>b</sup>
<b><u>Early alert system</u></b>					
	Broward Community College	FL	Linking early warning system with coaching program (If a student is at risk of academic failure, coaches notify both the student and the faculty and then work with the student.)	Students in developmental courses at risk of not passing a class	Partial
	Danville Community College	VA	Revised continuous alert system, making it easier to contact and track students and allowing faculty to follow up electronically to see the assistance that students have received	Students at risk of not passing a class	Full
	Durham Technical Community College	NC	Implementing a strategy for faculty members to identify and refer students to assistance during the first 7 weeks of the semester	Students at risk of not passing a class	Partial
	Galveston College	TX	Developing early alert system to enhance outreach to student deemed at risk of not passing a course by faculty	Students at risk of not passing a class	Partial
	Hillsborough Community College	FL	Working in conjunction with a Title III funded First-Year Experience program. Success coaches contact students exhibiting at-risk behavior during the first 3 weeks of the academic term	First-year students / 175 students	Partial
	Patrick Henry Community College	VA	Implementing new attendance monitoring software to assist faculty in identifying students at risk of failing courses	Students at risk of not passing a class	Partial
	Paul D. Camp Community College	VA	Requiring faculty teaching gatekeeper courses to take attendance and to refer students at risk of failing to student services staff	Students enrolled in gatekeeper courses	Partial

**Appendix Table C.1 (continued)**

Strategy	College	State	Description	Target/Scale <sup>a</sup>	Implementation Progress <sup>b</sup>
<b><u>Early alert system (continued)</u></b>					
	Tallahassee Community College	FL	Automated early warning system, which allows faculty to electronically identify students at risk of failing a class and targets the identified students for student services	Students at risk of not passing a class	Full
<b><u>Individual Learning Plans / case management advising</u></b>					
	Galveston College	TX	Implementing a student assessment for nondevelopmental students that uses emotional intelligence concepts	Nondevelopmental students	Partial
	Houston Community College System	TX	Combined a college success course, intensive faculty advising, and career counseling for students in developmental courses	Students in developmental courses	Full
	New Mexico State University-Doña Ana	NM	Combining intensive advising and early registration for Hispanic males in developmental courses	Hispanic males in developmental courses	Early
	Patrick Henry Community College	VA	Assigning at-risk students to intensive counseling services	Incoming students / 150 randomly chosen students	Partial
	Santa Fe Community College	NM	Offering group counseling in a classroom setting for incoming students to discuss the placement exam results, scheduling classes, and declaring a major	Incoming students	Early
	South Texas College	TX	Hired consultants to assess current structure of student advising; implementing an intrusive case management advising model including 10 counselors, 12 academic advisers, and 110 faculty/staff with formal adviser certification to assist students on 5 campuses	All students	Partial

**Appendix Table C.1 (continued)**

Strategy	College	State	Description	Target/Scale <sup>a</sup>	Implementation Progress <sup>b</sup>
<b><u>Individual Learning Plans / case management advising (continued)</u></b>					
	Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute	NM	Providing more extensive services to developmental students, such as individual learning plans, goal setting, and career assessment, as part of one-stop student services center	All students	Partial
<b><u>Use of technology</u></b>					
	Brookhaven College	TX	Implementing on-line registration program that students can access from anywhere	All students	Full
	Durham Technical Community College	NC	Implementing new appointment system software as a key component of new advising system	All students	Early
	San Juan College	NM	Using a database to create comprehensive student record	All students	Full
	Tallahassee Community College	FL	Initiating a Strategic Knowledge Management System (SKMS) that helps align resources for students, with potential to facilitate diagnostic advisement and student tracking	All students	Early

### **Appendix Table C.1 (continued)**

SOURCES: MDRC and CCRC field research data.

#### NOTES:

<sup>a</sup>Definitions may vary by college. "Incoming students" refers to all new students who are enrolled in the college, regardless of educational goal. First Time in College (FTIC) students are incoming, nontransfer, fall-cohort students who are curriculum students, which usually refers to degree-seeking, nondevelopmental students.

<sup>b</sup>Implementation progress was determined based on the following definitions.

*Early implementation:* The implementation process has begun — for example, by dedicating staff, clearly articulating goals and strategy, and offering a pilot and/or taking other preliminary actions.

*Partial implementation:* The strategy is implemented and close to or in full swing, which may include refining the strategy, offering a pilot, and/or bringing the pilot up to scale.

*Full implementation:* The strategy is institutionalized and has reached the college's proposed scale and target population.

**Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count**  
**Appendix Table C.2**  
**Developmental Education Strategies Implemented at Round 1 Colleges as of Spring 2006**

Strategy	College	State	Description	Target/Scale <sup>a</sup>	Implementation Progress <sup>b</sup>
<b><u>Accelerated courses</u></b>					
	Brookhaven College	TX	Developed an accelerated course that combines 2 semesters of developmental education into 1 semester	Students in developmental courses	Full
	Houston Community College System	TX	Designed a 4-week boot camp focused on the skills that the students failed to master in their developmental math course	Students in developmental math / 9 students	Full
	Mountain Empire Community College	VA	Planning a fast-track math program	Students in developmental math	Early
<b><u>Policy change</u></b>					
	Durham Technical Community College	NC	Implemented a standard final for all developmental math courses and a standard assessment for all reading courses	Students in developmental math and reading	Full
	El Paso Community College	TX	Changing exit examinations for developmental courses	Students in developmental courses	Early
	Galveston College	TX	Overhauling COMPASS placement testing, realigning cutoff scores to match national averages, and training staff on interpreting scores	Incoming students	Early
	Martin Community College	NC	Discontinuing use of placement test as final exam for developmental math courses	Students in developmental math	Partial

(continued)

**Appendix Table C.2 (continued)**

Strategy	College	State	Description	Target/Scale <sup>a</sup>	Implementation Progress <sup>b</sup>
<b><u>Policy change (continued)</u></b>					
	South Texas College	TX	Reviewing assessment tool (Accuplacer) and appropriate cutoff scores for developmental and academic classes	All students	Early
	Southwest Texas Junior College	TX	Restricted enrollment in developmental classes to 15 students	Students in developmental courses	Full
<b><u>Reform</u></b>					
131	El Paso Community College	TX	Reorganized developmental education, including the creation of a new position, Director of Student Success, to work with the developmental education faculty	Students in developmental courses	Full
	Guilford Technical Community College	NC	Revised and expanded a developmental math course from a semester to a year-long course and restructured the reading curriculum	Students in Math 070 and students in developmental reading	Full
	Hillsborough Community College	FL	Working to reduce credit hours in all developmental subjects — for example, cut developmental reading credit hours from 5 to 4	Students in developmental courses	Partial
	Paul D. Camp Community College	VA	Restructured developmental courses by creating multiple courses out of previously collapsed courses	Students in developmental courses	Full
	Southeastern Indian Polytechnic Institute	NM	Restructured the developmental math curriculum to ensure consistency in content across classes	Students in developmental math	Full
	Wayne Community College	NC	Created separate department for developmental education and required labs to offer some developmental math courses	Students in developmental courses	Full

(continued)

### **Appendix Table C.2 (continued)**

SOURCES: MDRC and CCRC field research data.

#### NOTES:

<sup>a</sup>Definitions may vary by college. "Incoming students" refers to all new students who are enrolled in the college, regardless of educational goal. First Time in College (FTIC) students are incoming, nontransfer, fall-cohort students who are curriculum students, which usually refers to degree-seeking, nondevelopmental students.

<sup>b</sup>Implementation progress was determined based on the following definitions.

*Early implementation:* The implementation process has begun — for example, by dedicating staff, clearly articulating goals and strategy, and offering a pilot and/or taking other preliminary actions.

*Partial implementation:* The strategy is implemented and close to or in full swing, which may include refining the strategy, offering a pilot, and/or bringing the pilot up to scale.

*Full implementation:* The strategy is institutionalized and has reached the college's proposed scale and target population.

**Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count**  
**Appendix Table C.3**  
**First-Year Experience Strategies Implemented at Round 1 Colleges as of Spring 2006**

Strategy	College	State	Description	Target/Scale <sup>a</sup>	Implementation Progress <sup>b</sup>
<b><u>College success course</u></b>					
	Alamo Community College District	TX	Revamping and expanding a 2-day student success course into an 11-week curriculum	Incoming students	Partial
	Broward Community College	FL	Linking a coaching and a college success course for students in 3 developmental courses at the second level, as part of college's educational plan	Students in 3 developmental courses / 437 students	Partial
	Central New Mexico Community College	NM	Expanding a college success experience course and working toward offering new college success course	Incoming students	Early
	Danville Community College	VA	Requiring a new 4-week or 8-week, 1-credit college success course	Incoming students / 16 sections	Partial
	Durham Technical Community College	NC	Revamping and institutionalizing a college success course, available in several modalities: traditional 16-week, 8-week on-line, and 8-week hybrid of on-line and classroom version	Students in health program / pilot	Early
	Guilford Technical Community College	NC	Linking a study skills course to a developmental English course and piloting a course with a paralegal program	Students in developmental English and in paralegal program	Partial
	Hillsborough Community College	FL	Offering a college success course linked to other courses with instructors as student coaches	All students / 7 sections	Partial

**Appendix Table C.3 (continued)**

Strategy	College	State	Description	Target/Scale <sup>a</sup>	Implementation Progress <sup>b</sup>
<b><u>College success course (continued)</u></b>					
	Houston Community College	TX	Offered college study skills for students enrolled in developmental courses	Students in developmental courses / 150 students	Full
	Martin Community College	NC	Requiring developmental students to take student success course that focuses on study skills, test taking, and college navigation	Students in developmental courses / 8 sections	Partial
	Mountain Empire Community College	VA	Conducting experiment to determine whether student success class should be mandatory for all students or only for at-risk students	All students	Early
134	Paul D. Camp Community College	VA	Requiring students to take 1 of 2 college orientation classes: college success course (1 credit) or survival skills course (2 credits), which is designed for students in developmental courses	Incoming students	Early
	Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute	NM	Created a student success course on Native American history; issues taught by academic counselors.	Native American students	Full
	Tallahassee Community College	FL	Offering a combination of workshops, assessments, and study skills to students in developmental courses	First Time in College students	Partial
	University of New Mexico-Gallup	NM	Developing a college success course	Incoming students	Partial
	Valencia Community College	FL	Expanding student success course to more First Time in College students by creating an alternative delivery and by linking the course to math courses	33% of First Time in College students	Partial

(continued)

**Appendix Table C.3 (continued)**

Strategy	College	State	Description	Target/Scale <sup>a</sup>	Implementation Progress <sup>b</sup>
<b><u>College success course (continued)</u></b>					
	Wayne Community College	NC	Requiring students who place into the low levels of developmental reading and writing to take a semester-long student success courses	Students in developmental reading and writing	Partial
<b><u>Student orientation</u></b>					
	Durham Technical Community College	NC	Developing new content for orientation and expanding the number of orientation sessions from 1 to 9 sessions	Incoming students / 300 students	Partial
	Galveston College	TX	Revised student orientation	Incoming students	Full
	Guilford Technical Community College	NC	Expanding new student orientation — for example, creating an on-line version	Incoming students	Partial
	Martin Community College	NC	Revamped student orientation to include breakfast/lunch and time for students to talk to faculty, learn about financial aid, and scheduling	Incoming students	Full
	Mountain Empire Community College	VA	Piloting an enhanced curriculum in the student orientation class	Incoming students / 150 students (pre-selected)	Early
	Paul D. Camp Community College	VA	Restructuring the orientation for prospective students and their family members to include extensive written material and the option of on-line orientation for distance learning	Prospective students	Partial
	South Texas College	TX	Developing a variety of ways for students to complete the newly required student orientation, such as one-on-one workshops	Incoming students	Partial

**Appendix Table C.3 (continued)**

Strategy	College	State	Description	Target/Scale <sup>a</sup>	Implementation Progress <sup>b</sup>
<b><u>Student orientation (continued)</u></b>					
	Wayne Community College	NC	Adding a semester-long orientation class for students in minority male mentoring program	Male students of color	Partial
<b><u>Student workshops</u></b>					
	Martin Community College	NC	Offered a 3-day workshop on motivation for students and faculty	All students	Full
<b><u>Testing assistance</u></b>					
136	Martin Community College	NC	Allowing students more than one chance to take the assessment, and offering a brief review/remediation to those who do not do well before retaking test	Incoming students	Early
	Mountain Empire Community College	VA	Offered on-line version of COMPASS and provided students with a diagnostic assessment to focus students' work before retaking placement test	Incoming students	Full
	University of New Mexico-Gallup	NM	Creating a reading/writing assessment to accompany the COMPASS test, including an analysis of student writing to ensure validity of test	Incoming students	Partial
	Wayne Community College	NC	Offering review workshop for the math portion of the placement test	Incoming students	Partial

(continued)

SOURCES: MDRC and CCRC field research data.

NOTES:

<sup>a</sup>Definitions may vary by college. "Incoming students" refers to all new students who are enrolled in the college, regardless of educational goal. First Time in College (FTIC) students are incoming, nontransfer, fall-cohort students who are curriculum students, which usually refers to degree-seeking, nondevelopmental students.

### **Appendix Table C.3 (continued)**

<sup>b</sup>Implementation progress was determined based on the following definitions.

*Early implementation:* The implementation process has begun — for example, by dedicating staff, clearly articulating goals and strategy, and offering a pilot and/or taking other preliminary actions.

*Partial implementation:* The strategy is implemented and close to or in full swing, which may include refining the strategy, offering a pilot, and/or bringing the pilot up to scale.

*Full implementation:* The strategy is institutionalized and has reached the college's proposed scale and target population.

**Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count**

**Appendix Table C.4**

**High School and Community Outreach Strategies Implemented at Round 1 Colleges as of Spring 2006**

Strategy	College	State	Description	Target/Scale <sup>a</sup>	Implementation Progress <sup>b</sup>
<b><u>Bridge program</u></b>					
	Broward Community College	FL	Creating a summer college prep program to help students complete developmental reading and math classes	Incoming recent high school graduates	Partial
	El Paso Community College	TX	Developing a program for high school seniors likely to place into developmental classes; program focuses on college success, individual tutoring, and preparation to retake assessment test (Accuplacer)	High school seniors in need of developmental education	Partial
	Martin Community College	NC	Establishing a pre-semester refresher for developmental math and English to help improve students' placement test scores	Incoming recent high school graduates	Partial
<b><u>Community outreach</u></b>					
	Durham Technical Community College	NC	Working with MDC to host Poverty Panel to discuss college's role in addressing poverty	Community	Partial
	El Paso Community College	TX	Creating the El Paso Area College Readiness Consortium, a partnership of the community college, local university, and 11 school districts	Community	Partial
	Guilford Technical Community College	NC	Creating partnerships with community agencies; for example, hosted luncheon and is compiling a referral manual of local services for students	Community agencies	Partial
	Houston Community College System	TX	Working with community members to increase residents' knowledge about the college, admissions, and financial aid, with the goal of increasing enrollment in low-income neighborhoods	Community	Early

**Appendix Table C.4 (continued)**

Strategy	College	State	Description	Target/Scale <sup>a</sup>	Implementation Progress <sup>b</sup>
<b><u>Community outreach (continued)</u></b>					
	South Texas College	TX	Hosted college-readiness conference attended by community members, local businesses, and the Board of Education	Community / 160 community members	Full
<b><u>Dual enrollment</u></b>					
	University of New Mexico-Gallup	NM	Creating a dual-enrollment program for all high school students, not only Advanced Placement students	Local high school students	Early
<b><u>Outreach to local high schools</u></b>					
139	Broward Community College	FL	Partnering with local high schools to administer a developmental education placement test to 10th-graders	Local high school students	Partial
	El Paso Community College	TX	Strengthening its partnership with 11 school districts, with the hope of reducing the number of high school students placing into developmental education, and working with University of Texas-El Paso to assess seniors via Accuplacer	Local high schools	Partial
	Patrick Henry Community College	VA	Assigned career coaches to local high schools to encourage college attendance	Local high schools	Full
	Paul D.Camp Community College	VA	Developing a program in which career coaches meet with students and parents, plan visits for students to industries, and provide students with tutoring to help them pass the dual-enrollment placement test	Local high school students	Partial

(continued)

**Appendix Table C.4 (continued)**

Strategy	College	State	Description	Target/Scale <sup>a</sup>	Implementation Progress <sup>b</sup>
<b><u>Outreach to local high schools (continued)</u></b>					
	Santa Fe Community College	NM	Sent Student Ambassadors to local high schools to give a presentation on college navigation and to offer mentoring	Local high school students	Full
	University of New Mexico-Gallup	NM	Negotiating agreements with local high schools to begin COMPASS testing in students' junior and senior years	Local high school students	Early
	Wayne Community College	NC	Offered an open house for local high students and their families	Local high school students	Full

SOURCES: MDRC and CCRC field research data.

NOTES:

<sup>a</sup>Definitions may vary by college. "Incoming students" refers to all new students who are enrolled in the college, regardless of educational goal. First Time in College (FTIC) students are incoming, nontransfer, fall-cohort students who are curriculum students, which usually refers to degree-seeking, nondevelopmental students.

<sup>b</sup>Implementation progress was determined based on the following definitions.

*Early implementation:* The implementation process has begun — for example, by dedicating staff, clearly articulating goals and strategy, and offering a pilot and/or taking other preliminary actions.

*Partial implementation:* The strategy is implemented and close to or in full swing, which may include refining the strategy, offering a pilot, and/or bringing the pilot up to scale.

*Full implementation:* The strategy is institutionalized and has reached the college's proposed scale and target population.

**Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count**  
**Appendix Table C.5**  
**Instructional Strategies Implemented at Round 1 Colleges as of Spring 2006**

Strategy	College	State	Description	Target/Scale <sup>a</sup>	Implementation Progress <sup>b</sup>
<b><u>Collaborative learning</u></b>					
	Mountain Empire Community College	VA	Incorporating active and collaborative learning into developmental classes, sending faculty for training, and offering workshops	Students in developmental courses	Early
	Patrick Henry Community College	VA	Providing support for the implementation of learning-centered teaching methodologies	All students / 27 faculty members (60% of faculty)	Partial
<b><u>Learning communities</u></b>					
141	Broward Community College	FL	Expanding learning communities from college-level courses to developmental courses	Students in developmental courses	Early
	Central New Mexico Community College	NM	Building on existing learning communities through increased professional development at Evergreen and creation of 3 learning communities partially focused on developmental courses	Summer target: pilot 3-5 classes with 100-200 students / fall target: offer 20 sections for 500 incoming students	Early
	Danville Community College	VA	Developing a learning community for students who tested into all developmental courses and selected certain majors	Degree-seeking students in developmental courses / 40 students	Early

(continued)

**Appendix Table C.5 (continued)**

Strategy	College	State	Description	Target/Scale <sup>a</sup>	Implementation Progress <sup>b</sup>
<b><u>Learning communities (continued)</u></b>					
	Guilford Technical Community College	NC	Expanding on learning communities already offered to include learning communities targeted at students in or transitioning out of developmental courses	Students in or transitioning out of developmental courses / 9 communities	Partial
	Houston Community College System	TX	Expanded multidisciplinary learning communities with coordinated content and assignments: developmental reading linked to study skills course, developmental reading linked to credit-bearing sociology class, and American Literature linked to Art History	Students on northeast campus	Full
142	Patrick Henry Community College	VA	Planning expansion of learning communities in the second year of implementation	Students in developmental courses	Early
	San Juan College	NM	Building on preexisting learning communities by implementing new learning communities as primary intervention to assist students with low basic skills	Students in developmental courses / every fall 115 students in 6 communities	Partial
	Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute	NM	Adding a student success course to the English/reading class twice a week	All students / 14 students	Partial

(continued)

**Appendix Table C.5 (continued)**

Strategy	College	State	Description	Target/Scale <sup>a</sup>	Implementation Progress <sup>b</sup>
<b><u>Learning communities (continued)</u></b>					
	Tidewater Community College	VA	Expanding number of learning communities that include developmental courses linked to college-level courses, with strong encouragement to complete college success course	Students in developmental courses / 12 communities	Early
	University of New Mexico-Gallup	NM	Implementing learning communities (block-scheduling course without themes or integrated course content) as primary intervention to assist students with low basic skills	Students in developmental courses / 80 students	Early
	Valencia Community College	FL	Targeted learning communities to 3 gatekeeper courses and developmental courses, including courses in introductory mathematic sequences with high enrollment and low success rates	Students in certain courses / 4 communities	Full

SOURCES: MDRC and CCRC field research data.

NOTES:

<sup>a</sup>Definitions may vary by college. "Incoming students" refers to all new students who are enrolled in the college, regardless of educational goal. First Time in College (FTIC) students are incoming, nontransfer, fall-cohort students who are curriculum students, which usually refers to degree-seeking, nondevelopmental students.

<sup>b</sup>Implementation progress was determined based on the following definitions.

*Early implementation:* The implementation process has begun — for example, by dedicating staff, clearly articulating goals and strategy, and offering a pilot and/or taking other preliminary actions.

*Partial implementation:* The strategy is implemented and close to or in full swing, which may include refining the strategy, offering a pilot, and/or bringing the pilot up to scale.

*Full implementation:* The strategy is institutionalized and has reached the college's proposed scale and target population.

**Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count**  
**Appendix Table C.6**  
**Professional Development Strategies Implemented at Round 1 Colleges as of Spring 2006**

Strategy	College	State	Description	Target/Scale <sup>a</sup>	Implementation Progress <sup>b</sup>
<b><u>Campuswide</u></b>					
	Danville Community College	VA	Using motivational speakers and conversations about race to address issues related to serving a diverse student body	All faculty, staff, and administrators	Partial
	Durham Technical Community College	NC	Offering workshops and presentations on student success and student-centered teaching in Teaching and Learning Center	Faculty	Partial
	Galveston College	TX	Developing diversity training for faculty and staff	Faculty and staff	Partial
	Guilford Technical Community College	NC	Encouraging Student Affairs staff to attend conferences	Student Affairs staff	Early
	Martin Community College	NC	Hired consultant from Appalachian State University to host 3-day professional development and student success workshop on motivation	All faculty, staff, and administrators	Full
	Santa Fe Community College	NM	Analyzing and disseminating findings from the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), including the creation of a Web site dedicated to the results	Faculty and administrators	Partial
	South Texas College	TX	Modeling an advising training program (8 workshops and 2 hours of mentoring by full-time academic adviser) on the National Academic Advising Association workshop series	Faculty and staff	Partial

(continued)

**Appendix Table C.6 (continued)**

Strategy	College	State	Description	Target/Scale <sup>a</sup>	Implementation Progress <sup>b</sup>
<b><u>Campuswide (continued)</u></b>					
	Tallahassee Community College	FL	Supporting a study on student feedback by Diversity Coordinator; offering "Welcome Back" to prepare faculty, staff, and administrators to teach and serve underprepared and culturally diverse students	All faculty, staff, and administrators	Partial
	Tidewater Community College	VA	Developing an adjunct academy to provide professional development training to adjunct faculty on such topics as course and syllabi preparation, test construction, grading, and use of Blackboard software	Adjunct faculty	Early
<b><u>Classroom-based</u></b>					
	Brookhaven College	TX	Allotting 1 hour every other Friday to faculty and staff for approved professional development activities, such as attending lectures or reading professional journals	Faculty and staff	Partial
145	Durham Technical Community College	NC	Giving faculty the opportunity to attend conferences and learn new teaching techniques in return for a presentation of said opportunity at the campus Teaching and Learning Center's workshops	Full- and part-time faculty	Partial
	Galveston College	TX	Increasing the number of developmental faculty with National Association for Developmental Education certification and offering other specialized trainings	Developmental faculty	Early
	Guilford Technical Community College	NC	Encouraging faculty participation in conferences to learn new teaching techniques or best practices	Faculty / 32 faculty members	Partial
	Mountain Empire Community College	VA	Providing opportunities for faculty to explore best practices at other institutions	Faculty	Partial

(continued)

**Appendix Table C.6 (continued)**

Strategy	College	State	Description	Target/Scale <sup>a</sup>	Implementation Progress <sup>b</sup>
<b><u>Classroom-based (continued)</u></b>					
	Patrick Henry Community College	VA	Hosted collaborative learning institute, in which other Achieving the Dream colleges participated	Faculty / 43 faculty members	Full
	Paul D. Camp Community College	VA	Created a faculty resource area in the college library	Faculty	Full
	South Texas College	TX	Making available professional development opportunities, such as in-house workshops or conferences	Faculty and adjuncts	Partial
	Southwest Texas Junior College	TX	Sending developmental education faculty to the Kellogg Institute to participate in training program for professional instructor certification	Developmental faculty / 4 faculty members	Early
146	Tidewater Community College	VA	Engaging outside speakers for workshops and creating a faculty resource area in the college library	Faculty	Partial
	University of New Mexico-Gallup	NM	Restructuring how the college offers professional development activities to allow faculty to choose from a menu of activities throughout the semester	Full- and part-time faculty / 12 events per year	Partial
	Valencia Community College	FL	Developing Teaching Learning Academy to help faculty understand how students learn, especially underprepared students	Faculty / 50 full-time faculty a year	Partial
	Wayne Community College	NC	Offering all-day sessions once a semester to faculty on various topics, such as critical thinking and poverty	Faculty	Partial

(continued)

## Appendix Table C.6 (continued)

SOURCES: MDRC and CCRC field research data.

### NOTES:

<sup>a</sup>Definitions may vary by college. "Incoming students" refers to all new students who are enrolled in the college, regardless of educational goal. First Time in College (FTIC) students are incoming, nontransfer, fall-cohort students who are curriculum students, which usually refers to degree-seeking, nondevelopmental students.

<sup>b</sup>Implementation progress was determined based on the following definitions.

*Early implementation:* The implementation process has begun — for example, by dedicating staff, clearly articulating goals and strategy, and offering a pilot and/or taking other preliminary actions.

*Partial implementation:* The strategy is implemented and close to or in full swing, which may include refining the strategy, offering a pilot, and/or bringing the pilot up to scale.

*Full implementation:* The strategy is institutionalized and has reached the college's proposed scale and target population.

**Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count**  
**Appendix Table C.7**  
**Student Support Services Strategies Implemented at Round 1 Colleges as of Spring 2006**

Strategy	College	State	Description	Target/Scale <sup>a</sup>	Implementation Progress <sup>b</sup>
<b><u>Access</u></b>					
	Central New Mexico Community College	NM	Offering evening and weekend hours for placement testing and advising	All students	Partial
	Danville Community College	VA	Provided one-on-one meetings with students to increase their understanding of the financial aid process	All students	Full
	Guilford Technical Community College	NC	Improving students' front-door experience of the college by offering printed brochures on all college majors, posting signs for registration, and promoting financial aid services	Incoming students	Partial
	South Texas College	TX	Implementing 5-part model for comprehensive student advising: "intrusive"/case management advising, mandatory student orientation, Student Welcome Center, faculty/staff advising, and recognition program for faculty/staff engaged in advising duties	All students	Partial
<b><u>Mentoring/coaching</u></b>					
	Broward Community College	FL	Assigning students in 3 developmental courses at second level a coach who provides additional support and information to students	Students in 3 developmental courses / 437 students	Partial
	Central New Mexico Community College	NM	Provided "achievement coaches" to help students navigate college life, in particular to access college resources and develop problem-solving skills	Students in developmental courses, with focus on at-risk students	Full

(continued)

**Appendix Table C.7 (continued)**

Strategy	College	State	Description	Target/Scale <sup>a</sup>	Implementation Progress <sup>b</sup>
<b><u>Mentoring/coaching (continued)</u></b>					
	Durham Technical Community College	NC	Implementing a mentoring program connected to the early alert system, including mentor training as well as in-person and phone meetings between mentor and mentee	At-risk students / 30 mentors & 120 mentees	Partial
<b><u>Registration</u></b>					
	Galveston College	TX	Enhancing student outreach program by having faculty and staff serve as mentors	Pilot: students in developmental courses	Early
149	Hillsborough Community College	FL	Linking success coaches or mentors and the college's early alert program	All students / 175 students	Partial
	Patrick Henry Community College	VA	Assigning mentors to students to help encourage student engagement and provide support	Incoming students / 75 students	Partial
	Santa Fe Community College	NM	Created Student Ambassador program to develop leadership skills among students who serve as peer mentors to other students	All students	Full
	Wayne Community College	NC	Minority Mentoring Project provides student support through meetings, workshops on team-building, time management, and discussion of important social issues	Male students of color / 40 students	Partial
	Brookhaven College	TX	Using faculty as greeters to answer questions for students waiting in line during registration	All students	Partial
	Broward Community College	FL	Changed registration program to make it easier for advisers to help students	All students	Full
	New Mexico State University-Doña Ana	NM	Implementing an early registration for Hispanic males in developmental courses	Hispanic males in developmental courses	Early

(continued)

**Appendix Table C.7 (continued)**

Strategy	College	State	Description	Target/Scale <sup>a</sup>	Implementation Progress <sup>b</sup>
<b><u>Student services center</u></b>					
	Danville Community College	VA	Raising money to create a student services building	All students	Early
	Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute	NM	Adding a one-stop student services center where students can access academic, financial aid, and social support in the same complex that houses a computer lab, tutoring facility, and student café	All students	Partial
	South Texas College	TX	Implemented a Student Welcome Center that assists students with enrollment and financial aid	All students	Full

SOURCES: MDRC and CCRC field research data.

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NOTES:

<sup>a</sup>Definitions may vary by college. "Incoming students" refers to all new students who are enrolled in the college, regardless of educational goal. First Time in College (FTIC) students are incoming, nontransfer, fall-cohort students who are curriculum students, which usually refers to degree-seeking, nondevelopmental students.

<sup>b</sup>Implementation progress was determined based on the following definitions.

*Early implementation:* The implementation process has begun — for example, by dedicating staff, clearly articulating goals and strategy, and offering a pilot and/or taking other preliminary actions.

*Partial implementation:* The strategy is implemented and close to or in full swing, which may include refining the strategy, offering a pilot, and/or bringing the pilot up to scale.

*Full implementation:* The strategy is institutionalized and has reached the college's proposed scale and target population.

**Appendix Table C.8****Tutoring/Supplemental Instruction Strategies Implemented at Round 1 Colleges as of Spring 2006**

Strategy	College	State	Description	Target/Scale <sup>a</sup>	Implementation Progress <sup>b</sup>
<b><u>Learning centers</u></b>					
	Broward Community College	FL	Created a learning center with a computer lab for supplemental tutorials for developmental courses	Students in developmental courses	Full
	Durham Technical Community College	NC	Developing a campus learning center to house early alert system services and tutoring	All students	Partial
	Hillsborough Community College	FL	Constructed a student success center: centralized computer lab, tutoring services, and various educational workshops	All students	Full
151	Guilford Technical Community College	NC	Conducting math lab for developmental class through the learning center	Students in Developmental Math 070	Partial
	Martin Community College	NC	Creating an academic skills center where students can work one-on-one with staff and use a computer lab with supplemental tutorials and special software	All students	Partial
	New Mexico State University-Doña Ana	NM	Established a student success center with centralized computer lab and tutoring services	All students	Full
	Patrick Henry Community College	VA	Devising a math lab to provide developmental math students with additional resources including tutorials and software	Students in developmental math	Early
	Valencia Community College	FL	Implementing a competency lab to provide tutorials and practice for core concepts covered in each developmental course	Students in developmental courses	Partial

(continued)

**Appendix Table C.8 (continued)**

Strategy	College	State	Description	Target/Scale <sup>a</sup>	Implementation Progress <sup>b</sup>
<b><u>Learning centers</u></b>					
	Wayne Community College	NC	Restructuring academic skills center to make it more conducive to learning and focusing on tutoring	All students / 400 students	Partial
<b><u>Supplemental instruction</u></b>					
	Coastal Bend College	TX	Piloting supplemental instruction in Intermediate Algebra (highest developmental math) and College Algebra	Students in Intermediate and College Algebra / 2 sections	Early
	Danville Community College	VA	Targeting supplemental instruction in developmental math courses	Students in developmental math	Early
	Hillsborough Community College	FL	Offering peer tutors in 3 gatekeeper courses: Intermediate Algebra, Anatomy and Physiology I, and Freshmen Composition	Students in gatekeeper courses / 13 sections	Partial
	New Mexico State University-Doña Ana	NM	Assigning in-class tutors to developmental courses that have high concentration of Hispanic males	Hispanic males in developmental courses / 28 students	Partial
	Patrick Henry Community College	VA	Offering supplemental instruction in developmental math courses	Students in developmental math	Partial
	Santa Fe Community College	NM	Offered supplemental instruction in developmental math courses	Students in developmental math	Full
	Tidewater Community College	VA	Expanding supplemental instruction to gatekeeper and developmental courses.	Students in gatekeeper and developmental courses	Partial

**Appendix Table C.8 (continued)**

Strategy	College	State	Description	Target/Scale <sup>a</sup>	Implementation Progress <sup>b</sup>
<b><u>Supplemental instruction</u></b>					
	Valencia Community College	FL	Providing supplemental instruction to developmental (college preparation) math courses	Students in developmental math courses / pilot: 29 sections	Partial
<b><u>Tutoring</u></b>					
	Broward Community College	FL	Assigned a tutor to students in 3 developmental courses.	Students in 3 developmental courses	Partial
	Danville Community College	VA	Improving the tutoring center facilities, increasing the number of tutors available, and increasing the range of courses with tutoring option	All students	Partial
	Durham Technical Community College	NC	Working to create a tutoring program linked to the early alert system	Students at risk of not passing a course	Early
	Martin Community College	NC	Funded additional tutors	All students	Full
	New Mexico State University-Doña Ana	NM	Created tutor positions in the Student Success Center	All students	Full
	Paul D. Camp Community College	VA	Offering free tutoring	All students	Partial

(continued)

SOURCES: MDRC and CCRC field research data.

NOTES:

<sup>a</sup>Definitions may vary by college. "Incoming students" refers to all new students who are enrolled in the college, regardless of educational goal. First Time in College (FTIC) students are incoming, nontransfer, fall-cohort students who are curriculum students, which usually refers to degree-seeking, nondevelopmental students.

### **Appendix Table C.8 (continued)**

<sup>b</sup>Implementation progress was determined based on the following definitions.

*Early implementation:* The implementation process has begun — for example, by dedicating staff, clearly articulating goals and strategy, and offering a pilot and/or taking other preliminary actions.

*Partial implementation:* The strategy is implemented and close to or in full swing, which may include refining the strategy, offering a pilot, and/or bringing the pilot up to scale.

*Full implementation:* The strategy is institutionalized and has reached the college's proposed scale and target population.

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